

Bat in your house? Don't touch it or kill it

August 21 2014, by Libby Roerig



Indiana State University graduate student Vanessa Rojas examines a bat while doing research in Tennessee this summer.

After a confirmed rabies case in Parke County last week, experts are urging caution if you find a bat in your home or office.

"If you try to kill a bat, you're more likely to get bitten," said Joy O'Keefe, assistant professor of biology and director of Indiana State University's Center for Bat Research, Outreach and Conservation. "Most [bats](#) people find in their houses are healthy and are not going to bite

them and give them rabies."

In fact, less than 1 percent of bats tested by the health department are positive for the disease, and bats are seldom aggressive, O'Keefe said. But the bat inside your house could be a federally endangered species, such as the Indiana Bat, which is found in this area.

So if you spot a bat in your home or office, don't kill it or touch it with bare hands, O'Keefe said. Instead, put on a pair of heavy gloves and gently scrape it into a box or bucket. Once contained, the bat can be evicted outside—away from children and pets.

"If it's a healthy bat, it'll crawl up a tree and it'll fly away eventually. O'Keefe said. "If it doesn't move or seem to be healthy, you can take it to the health department to be tested."

If there's a possibility it bit a child or unvaccinated animal, O'Keefe recommends getting the bat tested.

This time of year is when bats move from their summer roosting sites to their winter roosting sites, O'Keefe.



A bat is seen perched in a cave.

"They're definitely moving, and that's why we're starting to see them in our buildings this time of year," said O'Keefe. "We get calls every year during the first month of school from people finding bats in buildings on Indiana State's campus."

Bats are a tremendous help to people, as every night they can eat up to

their entire body weight in insects, such as mosquitos, moths and beetles. Bats, however, are facing tremendous threats from the devastating White Nose Syndrome epidemic, wind turbines, and habitat destruction.

"The best way the average person can help bats is by understanding them and by telling other people how awesome bats are and what bats do for us," O'Keefe said. "Hopefully, that (awareness) will translate into the mindset that if there's a bat in my house, I should try to get it out but not kill it. That would be really positive for bats—to not have people be one of their major threats."

Provided by Indiana State University

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