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(Neb.)-Got Bats? UNK Professor Wants To Know



By: Roxie Graham-Marski Posted at: 10/31/2013 09:40 AM

(NEBRASKA)-With Halloween here, many people have put up their spookiest décor--cackling witches, giant spiders, and a plethora of bats, depicting large fangs and evil eyes. These winged mammals have gotten a bad rap over the years as they turn up in unfavorable locations, like house attics and barns, and are chastised for being flying rabies carriers.

However, what people don't know about bats may literally "bug" them in the future – these insectivores are devout mosquito killers, with individual bats consuming thousands of mosquitoes in one night alone. They don't just single out mosquitoes either. Bats consume several agricultural pests that can do harm to crops and gardens.

On the east coast, a fungus has decimated nearly six million bats since 2006. White-nose Syndrome develops on the bats' exposed skin, causing erosion and irritation. The discomfort causes bats to wake up during crucial hibernation times and exert energy they cannot replenish without spring and summer insects. If the fungus continues to spread westward, the negative impacts on bat populations may be irreversible.

Dr. Keith Geluso, an Associate Professor at the University of Nebraska-Kearney, wants to start locating winter roost locations of Nebraska bats so he can track potential changes in populations. By finding these roosts, Geluso can also determine the type of species occupying them and when they arrive at and leave the roost. He's asking members of the public who know of a location that contains **five or more** roosting bats to please e-mail him at gelusok1@unk.edu.

Nebraska National Forests and Grasslands wildlife biologist Phil Dobesh is excited about the opportunity to collaborate with Geluso on finding bat species that could potentially be affected by White-nose Syndrome. Dobesh says, "When I know what sensitive species are on Forest Service lands, it will help me be able to implement a forest protection plan for these bats."

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--U.S.Forest Service