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LETTERS

An event in Bali...

In the fall of 1957 I was in Bali not long after there had been an eclipse of the sun. Bali artists are very sensitive to the environment and one had depicted the event as shown in the enclosed photographic copy of an original watercolor.

As you will see, the eclipse is depicted as a palm treetop monster biting into the sun. In the ensuing darkening, a dog is howling at the monster, and a villager is beating a bamboo gong to frighten off the monster. Of interest to you will be the flight of fruit bats in response to the darkening sky and the villager capturing a fruit bat by the traditional method of vibrating a long pole with a net on top.

Harold Tropido
New Orleans



Artists in Bali depict the traditional method of catching flying foxes with the use of a net at the end of a long pole. PHOTO BY HAROLD TROPIDO

Close encounters...

In those far-off days before the last War, my family would take month-long holidays in Scotland and Wales, and sometimes in Norfolk, an eastern province of England, the north part of which forms the bulge into the North Sea. My father, Fish-hawk was his

nom-de-plume, was a well known ornithological artist and naturalist and loved the Broads of Norfolk, home to hundreds of birds, and with a magnificent bird sanctuary. This whole part of the world is very flat, much of it reclaimed from the sea. One particular year the sea dikes had broken, and the vast beds of reeds and wheat fields were sick from the salt. All was yellowed and dead with a terrible smell. I was a teenager, awkward, too young for the adults, too old for my younger cousins. I hated the whole place, flat and smelly after beautiful mountainous Scotland. Then, one day, something really different happened which changed my feelings for the summer, and gained me some recognition as a person of interest.

We were often put to considerable discomfort by bats who would swing into the house on their evening hunting forays, blinded by light (no screens in England). The whole place would fill with screams of terror as the children and adults flailed around trying to get the bats out. My father would roar us all into some form of quiet, put out the lights and open a door and some windows, and pretty soon the bats would go, or so we thought. The next day after one such evening, we were all at lunch. My six-year old cousin had a terrific cold and kept sneezing. I ran upstairs to fetch him a handkerchief--no paper tissues then. I opened a drawer on the mahogany chest. It now, I am sure, rates as an antique, ornately carved with a marble top on which sat a ewer [pitcher] and basin, the ewer full of water. Imagine my astonishment when my eyes fell on a bat in the ewer, floating on the water, unable to climb the porcelain sides. At first I was frightened, and then seeing its bright eyes and its pathetically ugly, almost human, face I felt pity. Remembering my father telling me that bats have little claws like hooks, I put my index finger under the wings, and the little creature allowed me to lift it out of its watery hell. I walked slowly and carefully downstairs and out into the garden, and managed to transfer the bat from my finger to a twig on the apple tree, trying to locate one that was shady. Of course, everyone left the lunch table and came to look. Again, I remembered my father telling me they like insects, but they were too difficult to catch with a bunch of noisy cousins around. I offered the bat some thick cream on my finger tip. Was it my imagination that it gratefully enjoyed it? After fifteen minutes it disappeared. Did it survive? In any case I have always been grateful to that little bat for changing my attitude from teenage blues into a greater interest in nature.

Ivri Patricia Wormser
New York

The saga of Lucky and Lorraine...

During the summer while my mom was putting my dog in the garage, she saw a baby bat on the floor. At first she didn't know what it was. It was a funny looking pink thing that was making lots of squeaky noises. It had fallen from the rafters. She got my dad. When my mom picked it up, the bat grabbed onto her hand. They thought it must be okay after the fall. My dad got the baby bat and put in on a garbage can lid and put it up in the rafters, hoping its mother would come and get it. The reason why my parents didn't kill the bat is because they read about bats and knew how important bats were. We named it "Lucky." He was only a few days old the first time we saw him.

Then, about a month later my mom found the bat on the floor of the garage again, so we did the same thing. His mother came and got him again. Lucky had fur and his eyes were open. I got to touch him.

Not long after that we saw Lucky and Lorraine, his mother, flying out of the garage

together. We saw them almost every night the rest of the summer. My dad has plans to build a bat house. Maybe someday we will have more bats in our yard.

My mom is a member of Bat Conservation International.

Polly Bavo

Nevada City, California

A note of precaution: Wild animals often bite in self-defense when picked up. A protective glove should always be worn, especially since a grounded bat could be sick.

Letters to the Editor may be edited for clarity and length.

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