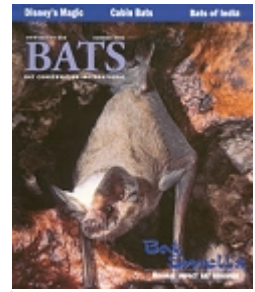


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Picnic Bats

When a nursery colony of little brown myotis (*Myotis lucifugus*) moved into a large picnic pavilion in a popular suburban forest in Illinois, a typical response might have been to drive the bats away. Instead, the Lake County Forest Preserves posted signs: “Quiet! Bats Sleeping.”



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[8.4 MB]

That was several years ago. Now the bats, which number around 200 during the summer, own the original picnic shelter while humans enjoy a freshly built pavilion nearby.

Mark Hurley, Environmental Educator for the agency that manages some 24,000 forested acres about 40 miles from Chicago, says visitors first reported the bats, which had moved into narrow crevices in the pavilion roof. The open shelter is big enough to house about two dozen tables and sits in one of the county's most popular forests.

Along with the signs, the preserves' staff built a fence around the shelter to keep people out and built a new pavilion for picnickers. Programs on August evenings, with educational talks highlighted by the bats' emergence from the shelter for a night of foraging, have proved popular.

The county agency is celebrating its nearly complete bat shelter and educational exhibit June 15 with a Bat Fest that's expected to draw up to 300 people. BCI members Jamie Godshalk and Marj Lundy will be honored guests at the Fest; their \$1,000 donation made the exhibit possible.

With funding in hand, the agency hired wildlife artist Linda Wallis to develop an interactive exhibit aimed at both children and adults. And, Hurley says, the county is so fond of its bats that it's looking into enhancing the shelter. “The bats are using the crevices,” he says, “so maybe we could cut a few more crevices in there for them.”

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