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LETTERS

Getting rid of wasps in bat houses...

I have read your excellent instructions on building bat houses and would like to comment on the methods used to remove wasps from bat houses. I base my comments on several years experience in doing research on paper wasps.

The "chloroform bag on a pole" method sounds troublesome and is dangerous in that one has to keep chloroform around. The important thing is to get rid of the nest, which can be destroyed safely with a blast from a high-pressure garden hose. You can step on adults knocked down by the hose.

Even better, use a pole to knock the new combs down in the spring before workers emerge. That means late May or early June in the northern half of the U.S. The foundresses (one or more) may re-nest at the spot; if so, just knock the comb down again a month later. The developmental period lasts 35-40 days, egg to adult.

The more wasps on the comb and the later in the year, the more aggressive they are. The point is to hit them early. A cold day is better than a warm one; they will be slower.

J.E. Klahn

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Bats to the rescue...

I have just finished reading an article by Kerry Givens about bats and BCI [Modern Maturity, October 1990]. It reminded me of an incredible experience some years ago on Lake Powell. Our family had set up camp started to cook the steaks. It was dusk, and there were a few mosquitoes, but the smell of cooking must have attracted all the insects for miles. Before dinner was ready, there were millions of them--they were in our ears, eyes, and mouths if we tried to talk. I had had a particularly bad day anyway and was in as foul a mood as I had ever been. Just when I thought nothing else could possibly go wrong, a wave of what appeared to be several hundred bats arrived. They really descended upon us, flying between us, within inches of our faces. Between the bats and the mosquitoes, cooking became impossible.

Just when I started screaming at the bats, the insects, my kids, my wife, and the world in general, and was about to go in the cabin, close the doors and windows, and abandon the steaks, the bats left as suddenly as they had arrived minutes before. We then made an amazing discovery--all the insects were gone too! The bats must have eaten every single one, because I never saw another insect the rest of the evening.

I have had a special affection for the furry little critters ever since and would like to learn more about them.

R.J. Rimensberger
Murray, Utah

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