

Taxpayers help bats, butterflies

AP Some of Michigan's most neglected wildlife — from the maligned bat to a rare species of butterfly — are receiving a helping hand again this year from taxpayers.

Contributions checked off on state income tax forms for Michigan's Nongame Wildlife Fund will be used to finance field studies to improve habitats and survival rates for the wildlife.

Bats, northern blue butterflies, common loons, purple martins and lake sturgeon — fish that can grow to 100 pounds or more — all will benefit from the donations.

The introduction of peregrine falcons to urban settings in Detroit and Grand Rapids also was financed with non-game wildlife contributions.

About 116,000 Michigan taxpayers, averaging contributions of \$1.55, donated \$550,000 toward the program in 1987, the fourth year since the state Legislature set up the checkoff system.

For safety, know insecticides

Q. I hear so many different opinions on using pesticides. What can you tell me?

The National Coalition Against the Misuse of Pesticides says that pesticide misuse can begin "the moment a pesticide's development begins if careful steps are not taken to ensure public safety."

NCAMP's primary focus is to educate people with the knowledge needed to prevent harmful exposure and misuse and encourage safe alternative pest-management strategies.

MYTH 1: A pesticide registered by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency or state authorities is safe.

Pesticide safety begins with what we know and don't know about these chemicals. While information on one chemical may be available, there may be no information on another.

A 1982 congressional staff report said:



Terry Gibb

• 79-84 percent of the pesticides on the market have not been adequately tested for their cancer-causing effects.

• 90-93 percent of the pesticides have not been adequately tested for their ability to cause genetic damage.

• 60-70 percent have not been fully tested for their ability to cause birth defects.

These basic problems are the result of an inadequate pesticide control law — the Federal Insecticide Fungicide & Rodenticide Act. Because of major loopholes, this law allows pesticides to remain in use de-

spite inadequate information about the effects these products may produce.

MYTH 2: A pesticide is safe when it is used according to label instructions.

Pesticide ingredients must be listed on the label as:

• "Active" — the ingredients that actually do what the product is intended to do, such as kill insects.

• "Inert" — ingredients that form a vehicle to make the active ingredients easy to apply.

These inert ingredients are not tested for their acute or chronic

health effects and may be as dangerous as the active ingredients.

Product labels regarding emergency antidotes may not be the best first aid remedy. A random survey found that 85 percent of the labels had inadequate or erroneous first aid information, while 6 percent of the labels had information that would be dangerous to the victim.

Toxic (poisonous) pesticides ultimately touch everyone's life. From 1950 to 1983, pesticide production increased from 200,000 to 2.7 billion pounds. The introduction of this tremendous amount of toxic chemicals into the environment has a long-term impact on the ecological balance and human health.

TO REDUCE this overload of chemicals into your environment, try these suggestions when using or considering toxic pesticides:

1. Contact your county Cooperative Extension Service. The staff can recommend the most effective and least polluting product to use.

2. Consider alternatives to chemical pesticides whenever possible. Organic remedies work very well and eliminate harmful effects to the environment.

3. After using a chemical pesticide, avoid overwatering the area. The pesticide may run off with the excess water into nearby streams or storm drains.

4. Do not apply pesticides if rain is forecast. Rain will carry these chemicals into nearby creeks or bodies of water.

The Consumer Mailbag answers your questions. Address mail to The Consumer Mailbag, 1 Kennedy Square, 4th Floor, Detroit 48226.

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