

Now's the time to send them packing

By Jim Wood  
special writer

They pass your face like a breath of air and never touch you. They're like shadows and if you listen hard, they squeak in the tiniest of voices.

The Germans call them Fledermauser, or flying mice.

We call them bats.

They are associated with caves, haunted mansions and bellfries, but it's your attic they prefer.

Bats can be heard rustling in and out. They raise a stink with their droppings and when they die. There's also the danger of rabies if you're bitten. And they're hard to get rid of.

But not if you know what to do and when to do it.

That time is now, before the frosts become too frequent. Once cold weather closes in, the bat colony at your address is home for good.

There are six species of bats in Michigan: the red, the hoary, the pallid, little brown, big brown, and the endangered Indiana bat. Little browns are the most common in this area, followed by the big browns. Big browns only nest in single-digit numbers, but the little browns average 20-40 in a colony, up to several hundred.

"It's not always easy to get rid of bats in your home," says Glenn Dudder, an extension wildlife specialist at Michigan State University, "but it gets impossible in winter. If you allow the bats to go into hibernation in your attic, that's where they'll be until spring. There's no way to rouse them once they've entered their dormant state."

THE IMPATIENT homeowner would think of extermination, but the professionals would advise against that at the start of winter.

"If absolutely necessary, only in an emergency," Kevin Clark, president of Critter Control in Westland, said of extermination. Like Dudder, he is unwilling to kill the tiny flying mammals because they are so beneficial to man and the ecological balance.

# BATS

Bats eat insects people would rather be rid of. And there are other reasons for not evicting them.

"If some of them crawl or fall into places where you can't reach them, you could be smelling them for quite a while. Killing the bats really doesn't solve the bat problem because it does nothing to prevent more bats from moving back in later," Clark said.

Neither does driving them out. Mothballs sort of work, but only if you can stand five pounds of them for every 2,000 square feet. Bats are sensitive to high-frequency sounds and can be forced to leave by some commercial sound devices.

Dudder suggests making one by attaching two to three silent dog whistles to an air pump, such as those used in a large aquarium, and running it continually near the roosting area.

Brightly lighting the roosting area continuously with four or more 100-watt bulbs has also worked after several days.

These measures, says Dudder, "range in effectiveness from adequate, if used properly, to worthless." None of them keep the bats from returning promptly.

To do that you must get them all out and prevent them from getting back in.

This may mean standing on a different side of the house around sun-

set on several consecutive nights until you spot the bats leaving," Dudder said.

He suggests going outside a bit earlier to give your eyes a chance to adjust to the waning light, as bats can be hard to see at that time.

IF YOU SEE them leaving, move quickly to stuff the openings while

they're gone. Openings are likely to be under eaves, around chimneys or near windows — with wood, window screening, hardware cloth, caulk, fiberglass insulation, or masonry.

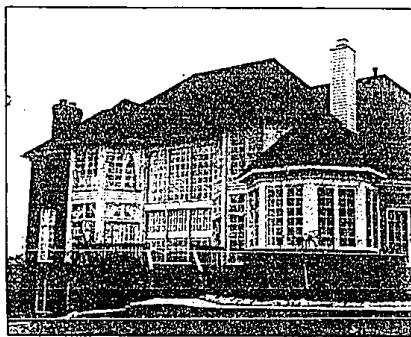
The alternative is to wait for a bright day and observe the darkened roosting area from the inside; you should be able to find the openings from light leaking in. Block all but

one or two openings. When the bats leave by these at sunset, close them up too.

Clark said he uses "check valves" when blocking up exits. These are PVC pipes placed vertically, such as under the eaves, that allow the bat to leave but prevents its return because the pipe is too slippery for it to crawl up. He likes copper mesh with

openings of one-eighth to one-quarter inch. One-half inch is too big.

Clark also recommends bat houses to trap bats. A bat house is placed on a pole like a martin house and is a plain box made of cedar on the outside, with a rough surface on the inside and a hole in the floor. Bats enter through the hole and cling to the rough walls.



DILL BRESLER/staff photographer

## Windows galore

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"You don't need them with a wall of glass," Bennett said.

Difficult to install properly, many owners complained that skylights leaked. Heat rises, making skylights a source of heat loss.

"But they can help in some dark areas," Bennett said.

Aluminum-framed windows are the big losers in this new trend. First it was discovered the frames promoted heat loss. Then they lost fashion points.

"Twenty-five years ago wood was out. It was considered old-fashioned," said Myers, whose house de-

sign won the people's choice award at this year's Homearama. "Now, there aren't that many aluminum windows. Wood holds heat better."

GLASS BLOCK, popular more than 30 years ago, is sneaking back into favor. Eight-by-eight walls of glass block are used to accent entrance ways and solve such problems as allowing light into baths while retaining privacy.

Although the emphasis on windows has begun to trickle down to average houses, chances are good buyers in that market won't see as much of the drama in their own houses. Large windows need higher ceilings.

## Adios, heavy drapes

Continued from Page 1

tion, according to Shears. Pleated shades with metallic backs are an energy efficient solution suggested by Cockle. Bear in mind the shades can be almost too heavy to pull up by hand. Mechanisms are available to

pull up the shades automatically, but they're costly.

To soften a pallid or curved top window and emphasize the architecture, Shears knots a fabric around the window.

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