

Bats from page A1



bats, "Radar," "Rio" and "Bella." Students were able to get a close look at the bats, as they were brought around the room by Bussa, who

"If you want to tell people about bats, if you're talking to mom and dad, sister and brother, tell them bats are a pretty good group. They eat mosquitoes and they don't hurt people."

Lori Bussa

—Organization for Bat Conservation

held them in her gloved hand.

There were plenty of "ooh's" and "ahh's" generated by the tiny visitors. And there were some nervous moments for students who maybe weren't yet at ease with the idea of getting real close to the bats.

"If you want to tell people about bats, if you're talking to mom and dad, sister and brother, tell them bats are a pretty good group. They eat mosquitoes and they don't hurt people," Bussa said.

She emphasized, however, that bats aren't pet material.

Power sixth-grade teacher Dyanne Sanders said the presentation was to help

students see bats in a more realistic, educational light.

"A lot of people are afraid of bats ... with all the horror shows you see on television," Sanders said. "We want to get rid of that folley. They're wonderful creatures."

And they are endangered creatures, too. It's one reason organizations such as Bussa's work hard at dispelling myths and educating young people that bats actually are worthwhile.

Students learned that bats aren't blind. Bussa said they see as well as dogs do. To augment their eyesight, they "put out a call," using ultrasonic sonar capabilities, to navigate and find insects in the dark.

"That sound hits everything in its path," Bussa said. "It

bounces off objects and into their ears and they get a mental picture of what's around them."

Bussa noted that bats hibernate in winter, often below bird nests — essentially being protected by mother birds who are shielding their own young from animals and other threats.

"She'll chase predators away and the bat underneath will be protected, too," Bussa said.

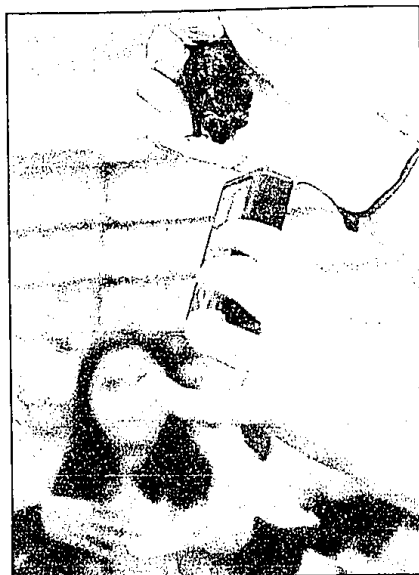
However, said there is one scenario where the media-fueled image of bats is accurate. Students were told to back away from injured, prone bats and call The Organization for Bat Conservation at (617) 656-9200.

"Let's say you find a bat on the ground," she said. "And you want to pick it up to help it. If it's on the ground it probably has a broken wing, and if he has a broken wing he's probably pretty prumpy."

The youngsters were instructed to not touch bats under any circumstances, especially injured ones who would bite anything it thought was preying on it. And that's how a bat would view a human being, even one lending a helping hand.

She added that because humans can contract deadly rabies from a bat, it's not worth the risk to try and handle them, even though less than half of 1 percent have the disease.

"There's a lot to know about bats," Bussa said. "... But all you really have to know is don't touch them."



STAFF PHOTO BY DILL BREWER

Listen: Lori Bussa amplifies the ultrasonic chirps of a bat. Warner Middle School student Katie Boland (in background) listens.

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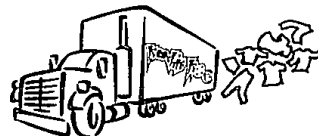
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Dr. Michael graduated from Wayne State University Medical School and completed her internship and residency at Northwestern University McGaw Medical Center. She practiced in Massachusetts for four years before returning to Michigan.

Dr. Michael speaks fluent Chaldean and Arabic, and is a member of the American College of Physicians and the American Medical Association. She is currently accepting new patients.

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