

Vampires in North Dakota?

Halloween is right around the corner and there are lots of bats and other ghoulish decorations everywhere.

Bats scare many of us—myself included—but do we need to worry about vampires or other bats in North Dakota?

Rarely.

The fear we have of bats is based on misconceptions, horror stories, and bloodthirsty Dracula movies. The recent *Twilight* trilogy of books and movies only adds to the notion that vampires are everywhere.

Bats are actually quite interesting animals. Some people put up bathouses to attract bats, much like others put up birdhouses to attract birds. Bats are highly beneficial because they eat tremendous numbers of mosquitoes and other insect pests.

Did you know that bats are the only mammals that can fly? They have outstanding homing abilities and often return to their same

home year after year. Bats live for a long time, sometimes up to 30 years.

Even though bats may be interesting, you don't want a colony of bats living in your attic. Their droppings can contribute to lung disease, cause odor, and stain walls. Bats can enter your attic through a hole as small as 3/8 inch across. You need to seal these holes in order to batproof your home.

If a single bat accidentally enters your living space, open a door or window and allow it to escape. If the bat can't find its way out, try to catch it and release it outside. Be calm and don't touch the bat. A frightened bat will bite to defend itself. Although most bats in our state are not rabid, there is a slight risk of contracting rabies from a bat bite.


Wait until the flying bat exhausts itself and lands. A pair of leather gloves can protect you from being bitten. After the bat lands, place a net over it and

close the top of the net. A butterfly net works better than a fish net since it has a tighter mesh, thereby preventing the bat from escaping.

If you don't have a net, cover the tired bat with a bucket or bowl. Slide a piece of cardboard under the bucket, trapping it.

A third option is to use a heavy blanket to gently smother the bat. In all cases, gently bring the bat outside and release it.

Lastly, don't worry about being bit by a vampire. Although there are lots of bats in our state, there are no vampire bats within a thousand miles of North Dakota.

For more information on batproofing your home, a good resource is University of Wisconsin publication G3096, *Bats: Information for Wisconsin Homeowners*. 



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