

Unwelcome Roommates

Just over a month after we settled into another semester at Meredith College, some of our classmates received troubling news. According to email communications sent to all students, teachers and staff in late September, one of the dormitories on campus had developed a bat infestation. To those living in the affected room, this meant medical exams and temporary relocation. The administration tells us they have taken precaution to minimize the risk of harm to students. They also included in the communications that they have chosen the most environmentally friendly ways to deal with the problem, which should also prevent the problem from coming up again in the near future.

To those not directly affected by the infestation, the lack of updates on the situation over several weeks can make it seem as though the problem was completely resolved quickly after it started. In truth, according to Resident Assistant Roxy McPherson, the relocated students were only just allowed to return to their assigned dormitory space in late October. They were in alternate housing for over a month. No one appears to have experienced anything worse than inconvenience as a result of this infestation.

Some facts to consider:

1. *Many of North Carolina's bat species are either listed as at risk or endangered.*
2. *Killing a bat is illegal.*
3. *Bats typically only birth one pup each year.*
4. *Bats are the leading culprit in human exposure to rabies --but--*
5. *The incidence of rabies in bats is statistically low.*
6. *Bats are crucial in controlling insect populations and in the pollination of some plant species.*

What is the takeaway?

Meredith College has a bat problem. For the second time in two years, a bat infestation was found in a campus building. As noted by the details in the InfoBar, this is a delicate situation. Meredith College has to consider the health and safety of everyone that attends and works here. They also have to consider the legal and ecological impact of any and every choice they make. In the official communication, some detail was given that described the steps college administrators plan to take to remove the infestation from this building and (hopefully) prevent it from relocating to another spot on campus. These steps are in line with recommendations found on the NC Wildlife Resources Commission and Old House magazine websites.