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A&M expert: Bats deserve more credit

COLLEGE STATION (AP) — Bats, those companions of vampires and dark nights, aren't nearly as bad as they seem, a Texas A&M researcher said.

“The problem is that most people have never seen a bat up close or touched one,” microbiologist David McMurray said. “They're much more attractive in many ways than rats or mice, animals we accept or at least tolerate.”

In the United States, bats do much more good than evil, McMurray said, particularly in activities such as insect control. Most bats dwelling in temperate climates are insect eaters, and they eat a lot.

A typical 20-gram adult bat probably eats at least one-third of its weight in insects every night, McMurray said.

Multiply that by the estimated 20 million bats that live in a place like Bracken Cave near San Antonio and the thousands of other bat colonies around the country, and tons of insects are eliminated every night.

In some regions of the world, fruit-eating bats play an important role in pollinating fruits and night-blooming flowers, McMurray said.

Nonetheless, bats get a bad rap, largely due to the role given them by the active imaginations of generations of novelists.

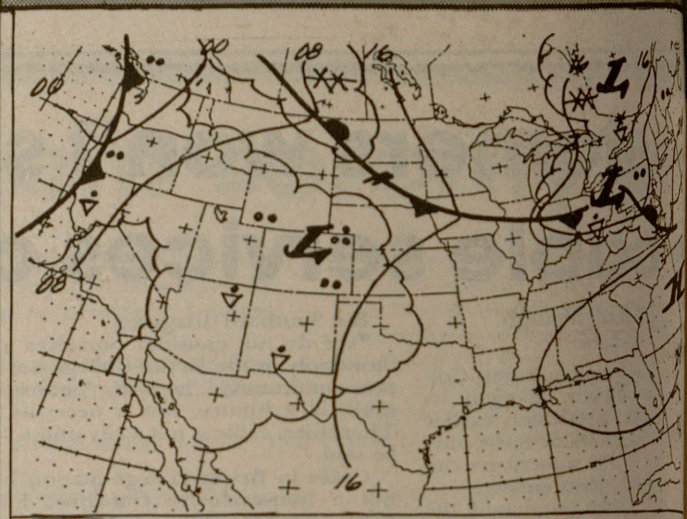
While most bat-phobia comes from traditional myths and ignorance, McMurray said some bat myths have some relation to reality.

Blood-eating, or vampire, bats do exist, McMurray said, but are rarely found outside the tropics. They usually feed on the blood of cattle and horses, not people.

These real-life vampires use razor-sharp incisors to shave off a thin patch of skin and lick the blood that oozes out.

The attacks do cause substantial economic losses in some areas in Latin America but encounters between humans and vampire bats are very rare, McMurray said.

Weather Watch



Key:
 ⚡ - Lightning ☁ - Fog ⚡ - Thunderstorm
 ☔ - Rain ❄ - Snow ☂ - Drizzle
 ⚠ - Ice Pellets ☔ - Rain Shower ☁ - Freezing Rain

Sunset Tonight: 5:39 p.m.
 Sunrise Saturday: 6:38 a.m.

Map Discussion: The low pressure system over the Central Rockies produce widespread low ceilings and rain as it moves into the central plains. An intense front moving onshore in the Pacific Northwest will bring rain to that area, some of which has had no measurable rain for over 100 days. The low and front over the Great Lakes will initiate scattered showers while the southeast and south central states enjoy and mild conditions.

Forecast:
 Today: Partly cloudy and warm with a high of 86 degrees and wind south at eight to 14 mph.

Tonight: Becoming mostly cloudy near daybreak, mild with a low temperature of 67 degrees and light southerly winds.

Saturday: Mostly cloudy through mid-morning becoming partly cloudy and warm in the afternoon with a 20 percent chance of rain. Winds to be southerly at 10 to 15 mph and the high will be 85 degrees.

Weather Fact: Snow - precipitation composed of white or translucent ice crystals, chiefly in complex branched hexagonal form. Classification of snowfall intensity can be by rate of fall or by visibility criteria.

Prepared by: Charlie Brent
 Staff Meteorologist
 A&M Department of Meteorology

CS police sergeant vies for Alameda county commissioner seat

By Elisa Hutchins
 Staff Writer

College Station Police Sgt. Gary Norton said Thursday that his name will be on the ballot for Brazos County Commissioner, Precinct 1, when the 1988 November election rolls around.

Norton, 35, said, “It's my opinion that there is a real need for some major changes in our commissioners court. They must be willing and able to work in harmony with county officials, and we're not seeing that now.”

The four commissioner's spots are \$30,000-a-year jobs, and are four-year terms. Two positions are up for re-election in 1988 - Precinct 1 in College Station and Precinct 3 in Bryan.

Norton, who is running for Precinct 1 commissioner, moved to College Station in 1964 and has spent 13 years on the police force in several different areas. He was a patrolman

for four years and also has worked in administrative positions on the force like overseeing a \$3.1 million budget.

Currently, he is in charge of police officer recruiting and training.

He would not discuss specific issues such as differences in policy with current commissioners, but mentioned broad changes he would like to see made.

“The good-old-boy system needs to change,” he said. “People need to get involved and be concerned with how their tax dollars are being spent, not just let a few take charge.”

The man to beat in the upcoming March primaries is Precinct 1 Commissioner Bill Cooley who has had the position since 1973 and will run again in 1988.

“I fully intend to win the election,” Cooley said. “I've been representing my constituents, and they aren't bashful about letting me know if they have a problem. I don't think

communication is a problem.”

Besides Cooley's spot, Precinct 2 is headed by Billy E. Beard, a former election judge. The two remaining commissioners are Walter Wilcox of Precinct 2 and Milton Turner of Precinct 4.

Commissioners court is not a court, but similar to a board of directors. It is made up of four commissioners and is overseen by the County Judge Richard Holm.

Commissioners oversee the county budget, which for the 1988 fiscal year is more than \$100 million, a court spokesman said.

Also responsible for road maintenance in their precincts, commissioners make sure voting locations in areas meet legal requirements.

Norton said he is optimistic about the outcome.

Cooley said it will be an interesting race and expects to see a higher than average voter turnout for the 1988 presidential election.

A&M officials dedicate new computer system

By Mary-Lynne Rice
 Staff Writer

With the cutting of a maroon and white ribbon tied around Texas A&M's new IBM 3090 computer, Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs Donald McDonald dedicated the computer system Thursday morning.

University officials and IBM representatives hailed the computer system as an excellent tie between the two organizations and an opportunity for A&M to expand its computing capabilities greatly.

“This is a red-ribbon day for us,” Associate Provost for Computing and Information Systems John Dinkel said.

Syd Heaton, IBM vice president of information services, said, “There have been many, many conversations spread over the last three or four years that had to do with the importance of bringing together a couple of what I consider to be excellent organizations back together in a partnership mode.”

“I view this not really as the culmination of all those conversations, but really the start of the two organizations having the opportunity to work together. It's only going to get better from here.”

The computer, which was installed in August, replaced part of the existing system and now handles most computing work on campus.

With the introduction of the 3090, A&M's computing capacities will double, Dinkel said.

“We're delighted to have the new equipment, the new facility, the new capabilities...”

— Provost Donald McDonald

which is a piece of hardware and software associated with the 3090, provides us the capability of doing large, scientific, numerically-intensive kinds of computations,” he said.

“It probably will increase capabilities on campus three- or four-fold over what we had prior to the installation (of the computer) in August.”

A&M is the only academic institution in Texas to have a 3090 with the vector facility, he said.

The new system also has the potential to link the University with industry, Dinkel said.

“The 3090 with vector facility is not a supercomputer, but it does provide very large-scale educational capabilities,” he said. “The equipment itself is very widely used in industry.”

McDonald said, “We're delighted to have the new equipment, the new facility, the new capabilities, and we're also delighted to have IBM. Each organization has a lot to offer the other. It's going to be an exciting future.”

Housewife helps NASA test shower

HOUSTON (AP) — Singing in zero gravity isn't the only thing about space, says a NASA scientist testing the space-age shower.

“I like to stand in a shower, let it beat down and relax,” Eley, 36, said. “And it's not that hot at all.”

Eley has soaped up about 10 times over the past 14 months government expense to NASA test the new shower.

her efforts, she earns about \$100 per hour.

During missions of up to 10 months, astronauts need to be clean if they are to be at their best, said Rafael Garcia, medical engineer at the Johnson Space Center's Man-Systems Integration Center. He has been working on the shower system for about 10 years. Carrying water into space is an expensive proposition — several thousand dollars per gallon when a gallon of water weighs 8.33 pounds.

W.R. Humphries, chief of life support branch of the Marshall Space Flight Center, said, “You probably wouldn't want to (space) station if you had to use up the water because it would mean that each crewman needs 52 or 55 pounds of water a day.”

Humans drink about 45-50 pounds of water per day, said Gene Garcia said.

AGGIE setting Quad at 8 p.m. OFF CA p.m. STUD matic UNITED 6:30 butter COLLE Matto at 7:3 1300 OFF CA p.m. MULTI student p.m. SINGIN MSC RUSSIA cuss “ MSC. INTERV “Serva CHESS C STUDEN and co floor o MSC PAO eant ap NAVIGA 7:30 p old or THE LAO annual LITTLE hints fo VOCAL the Sim Revelli Items for 216 Re fore de