

# Opinion

## Going batty at Brevard College

by Ben Goff  
News Editor

Last week, an e-mail sent to the student body by Dean of Student Affairs Sue Yowell, advised students that a rabid bat had been found in Transylvania County and that a student had come in contact with a bat in a residence hall.

The content of this e-mail betrayed a misunderstanding of our only flying mammals, which only serves to promote the atmosphere of fear and misunderstanding that already surrounds bats.

While promoting fear of bats may help the Dark Knight in his efforts to strike fear in the hearts of criminality, it does nothing to help our furry friends of the night. These attitudes all too often result in the unnecessary extermination of these animals.

All mammals can carry and transmit rabies- bats are no exception. That said, bats are statistically one of the lowest carriers of rabies amongst all mammals.

According to Dr. Frick-Rupert, bats carry rabies less frequently than other mammals, but bat bites have the highest rates of transmission of the disease to humans largely because any bats that do come into

contact with people, most likely have something wrong with them.

According to the Bat Conservation International (B.C.I), the myths associating bats with rabies are unfounded, with less than 0.5% of bats ever contracting the disease. Even rabid bats rarely come into contact with humans.

On average, less than one person a year in the U.S. is believed to contract rabies from bats.

According to the B.C.I, this means the "fear of rabies is far disproportionate to the actual risk. To put the risk in perspective, 20 Americans die every year from dog attacks, yet we would never consider massive media scare campaigns suggesting that we eradicate our canine friends."

The bottom line is that bats of all kinds are absolutely no threat to humans. Even in rare cases where a rabid bat does bite someone, the disease is easily treatable.

This does not mean that you should not take appropriate precautions. According to Frick-Rupert, any animal bite should be treated as a rabid bite unless it can be shown to be otherwise, and you should never attempt to handle wild animals.

Bats, in addition to being an important part of the ecosystem, are also a great benefit to humans. In eating large quantities of insects, bats serve as controls on the populations of pest species such as mosquitoes.

Many bats throughout the world feed on fruit and serve a valuable ecological service to humans by pollinating flowers and dispersing seeds- as service that many tropical agricultural systems depend on.

Most bat species in the US are in decline, and around half of our bat species are listed as endangered or threatened. The fact of the matter is that bats are no threat to us, but we are a huge threat to them, with human activities being the leading cause for decline.

As an institution that promotes environmental awareness, we should not be encouraging fear and misunderstanding of bats (a more careful wording of the above email could have prevented this). Instead, we should promote bat conservation and consider placing bat boxes on campus as a simple way to help bat populations recover, and as a symbol of our commitment to environmental stewardship.

### The Clarion

#### Senior Staff

Editor in Chief:	<b>Aaron Palmer</b>	Managing Editor:	<b>Joseph Chilton</b>
News Editor:	<b>Ben Goff</b>	Copy Editor:	<b>Rhea Frederick</b>
Business Editor:	<b>Kyle Hamilton</b>	Layout & Design:	<b>Travis Wireback</b>
Opinion Editor:	<b>Mandi Pearson</b>	Photo Editor:	<b>John Billingsley</b>
Arts & Life Editor:	<b>Zack Harding</b>	Business Manager:	<b>Emily Clark</b>
Sports Editor:	<b>Amethyst Green</b>	Faculty Advisor:	<b>John B. Padgett</b>

#### Other Staff

Nabil Aasiya-Bey	Travis Ellis	Charles Jordan	Jacob Roland
Carrie Bowen	Joe Holliday	Anne Martin	Jeron Sykes
Scott Brown	Madelyn Ivey	Marc Newton	David Ulloa
Zach Browning	Shawn James	Zachary Porch	Alec Woodard
Sara Duncan	Johnie Jones	Brian Randall	

Unsigned editorials represent the collective opinion of the staff of *The Clarion*. Other opinions expressed on this page are those of respective authors and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the faculty, staff or administration of Brevard College.

#### Letters Policy

*The Clarion* welcomes letters to the editor. We reserve the right to edit letters for length and content. All letters intended for publication must be signed.

**All correspondence should be mailed to:**

*The Clarion*, Brevard College, One Brevard College Drive, Brevard, NC 28712

**Send Email to:** [clarion@brevard.edu](mailto:clarion@brevard.edu)

Just a note,

To make sure your opinions are published in a timely manner, please send them to [clarion@brevard.edu](mailto:clarion@brevard.edu) by Wednesday at 5:00 p.m.