

Resolution on Bats and Emerging Infectious Diseases Adopted October 2014

WHEREAS, emerging infectious diseases (EID) have become an important topic of scientific research and a major concern for public health; and

WHEREAS, the members of the North American Society for Bat Research realize the importance of EID research; and

WHEREAS, bats are a mammalian group implicated as reservoirs of emerging infectious diseases (Schountz 2013), such as those caused by SARS, Hendra, Nipah, and Marburg viruses (Carrington et al. 2008, Calisher et al. 2008, Wibbelt et al. 2010); and

WHEREAS, often publications use wording that implies direct transmission of disease organisms from bats to humans, based upon circumstantial evidence rather than scientific verification or substantiation (Allela et al. 2005, Calisher et al. 2006, 2008, Fenton et al. 2006, Leroy et al. 2004); and

WHEREAS, circumstantial evidence of bats as transmitters of disease organisms is commonly presented by the Media as direct confirmation of bats as a public health threat; and

WHEREAS, sensationalized headlines can cause irrational fear of bats by the public (Brass 1994); and

WHEREAS, irrational fear and negative public perceptions of bats can lead to destruction of roost sites and the wanton killing of bats (Bexell and Feng 2013, Tuttle 2013); and

WHEREAS, bat populations are in serious decline worldwide due to ignorance, unfounded beliefs, persecution, over-hunting, disease, and habitat loss (Pierson and Rainey 1992, Racey and Entwistle 2003, Blehert et al. 2009); and

WHEREAS, bats are essential to ecosystem sustainability and maintenance of human health and provide significant economic services to humans worldwide (McConkey and Drake 2006); and

WHEREAS, unbiased scientific information and balanced presentation of evidence should be guaranteed in every case of EID; and

WHEREAS, the North American Society for Bat Research represents one of the leading organizations in the world in terms of bat science and conservation.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the North American Society for Bat Research at the 44th Annual Meeting of the North American Symposium on Bat Research, Albany, New York, 22–25 October 2014, recommends the following steps be implemented to provide appropriate protections to bats worldwide. We, as members of the North American Society for Bat Research, commit to:

- a) publishing popular articles and giving educational public talks promoting the importance of bats to ecosystem health and human well-being,
- b) working with the EID scientific community whenever possible to portray bats in a balanced and accurate perspective,
- c) working with EID scientists and public health officials whenever possible to produce accurate educational materials about the realistic threats of bats to the general public,
- d) working to help mitigate bat-human conflicts in areas where they may occur,
- e) working in concert with other bat conservation initiatives to ensure that bats are given fair treatment and are fairly valued for the ecosystem services and human benefits they provide, and reversing negative images of bats whenever possible.

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The North American Society for Bat Research (NASBR) is a society dedicated to the promotion and development of the scientific study of bats (Chiroptera) in all its branches, including conservation and public education. NASBR is a registered 501(c)3 non-profit organization. For more information about the society and contact information visit <u>www.nasbr.org</u>