

Native Prairie Speaker Series

Title: Goatsuckers: The enigma of feathered bats

Speaker: Mark Brigham, Professor, University of Regina

Presentation Summary:

I will talk about various aspects of our work on this fascinating group of birds. Nighthawks, Whippoorwills, poorwills as well as others from round the world, collectively known as Caprimulgids – which translated means goatsucker. They are shrouded in myths much like their cousins – the bats. I will speak about the myths surrounding both followed by some information we have about how, like bats, these birds may hibernate. I will show a good news story about how new data can shed light on a conservation issue and turn it positive.

Speaker Bio:

I am a Professor in the Biology Department at the University of Regina. My students and I are addressing questions about how bats and nightjars use torpor and hibernation to save energy during periods with low food availability. I also have students studying the ecology of endangered birds and mammals to understand the reasons for and reverse population declines. I am one of two co-editors of the Canadian Journal of Zoology. I received the University of Regina Alumni Awards for Public Service; for Teaching; and for Graduate student mentoring. I teach Introductory Biology, Ecology, Vertebrate Biology and Animal Behaviour. In 2006, I received the Gerrit S. Miller Jr. Award from the North American Symposium on Bat Research for outstanding lifetime service and contributions to Chiropteran Biology.

Aside from my formal teaching duties, I am a strong proponent of bringing Science and my research to the public. I regularly (10-20 times per year) give "bat talks" to school groups, naturalists organizations, and service clubs. Partly for this, I was awarded the 2008 Joseph Grinnell award by the American Society of Mammalogists for long term contributions to Education about Mammalogy.

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