

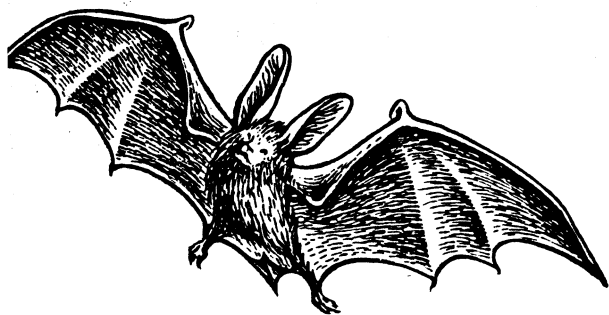
## Bats in the Belfry

Well – not quite: rather, one Long-eared Bat in my monastic cell having a fine time disposing of the moths from the previous night's capture.

I first noticed something rather odd the week before when the trap was left in a downstairs room with the window fully open so that the moths could depart in peace as usual after dark. But in the morning the room was littered with the heads and wings of many of the moths! I couldn't work it out but as a precaution placed the next batch in an upstairs room with the rooflight only open a couple of inches. A quick check later produced an ominous surprise. Every few minutes a dark silhouette flitted across the gap and then, even more ominously, scabbled at the gap as if to get in. It was too late to return the moths to the trap – they were already all over the room; they would just have to take their chance as they emerged through the opening. I sat there willing them to make a mass escape but, perhaps knowing that something was up, they were reluctant to go. Still, I thought, they were safe for the time being until, to my amazement, the bat landed on the window ledge, clambered through, and began to quarter the room. There was nothing for it but to switch on the light and see what it was getting up to. And there within a few feet of my head it was fluttering in neat circles and figures of eight readily catching any moths that dared to venture out. It was a grand opportunity to watch a bat at work, tail spread wide to help perhaps in capture and dispatch, but all done too quickly for me to be sure. The end result however was obvious as wings and heads tumbled to the ground.

The bat perched briefly a couple of times in the corner of the room and seemed perfectly at home in the confined airspace. Five minutes later it was gone.

One mystery solved but another one set: how to let the moths fly free next time without becoming easy prey for the bats. I haven't the conscience to repeat this drama and hope that by placing the moth trap well under a bush in the garden the moths will at least have a sporting chance in the future.



Br. John

