

# NEWS

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS  
(SOUTHWESTERN)  
MEDICAL SCHOOL AT DALLAS



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DALLAS---Thanks to scientists at The University of Texas (Southwestern) Medical School, things may soon get quite a bit "battier" at the Dallas zoo.

And Zoo Curator L.O. Calvin is happy about the prospect.

Three giant bats from Southeast Asia were donated to the zoo Friday (Aug. 14) by the medical school's Department of Microbiology. Dr. S. Edward Sulkin, chairman of the department, and Joseph Lutskus, fellow in microbiology, made the presentation.

The bats--two females and one male--will pair with the one female and two males that the zoo already owns. Calvin said the zoo had been attempting for some time to find more of the species, known as Pteropus (ter-OH-pus) or "Flying Fox."

The additional females, he said, will be particularly valuable in establishing a growing colony of the exotic flying mammals. All six bats will be housed together in a single enclosure.

The "Flying Foxes" are docile, fruit-eating mammals who spend most of their lives hanging upside down in trees in the tropical forests of India and Indochina. They remarkably resemble their land-bound namesakes in head shape and color and texture of their silky brown fur. Characteristically the nocturnal creatures gather in "camps" and migrate in search of fruit.

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first add bats

The big bats weigh about a pound each and have a wingspan of three to four feet. By comparison, bats commonly seen in the Southwestern United States weigh about one-half ounce and have a wingspan of 10 to 12 inches.

Although not predatory by nature, the fruit-loving Asian bats are capable of inflicting painful bites with their sharp canine teeth, which are longer than a land fox's and are designed to penetrate a coconut shell. Therefore, Calvin said, the bats are best viewed from behind the zoo's glassed enclosure.

Despite their biting ability, some of the bats reportedly are domesticated and kept as pets by Southeast Asians.

Dr. Sulkin said the medical school obtained the "Flying Foxes" from Thailand last year in order to study the characteristics and blood structure of the Old World bats. He emphasized that the bats given to the zoo had not been exposed to any disease.

In captivity, the bats eat their weight--about a pound--of fresh fruit per day.

Ironically, the flying mammals will reside in the zoo's Bird and Reptile Building. An echidna, egg-laying Australian cousin of the platypus, is the only other mammal housed with the birds and reptiles. . . . Eventual plans call for construction of a small mammal building for such creatures, Calvin said.

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