Another Unique Way for Bats to Die
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Bats have been found dead in a variety of situations unique to a small flying mammal. For example, they have been found impaled on thorns of cacti, burdock burrs, tree thorns, and barbwire fences (Mohr 1976, Schwartz and Schwartz 1981), and along the Current River in Missouri, one of the authors (VB) once found a dead bat hanging from a fishing line and hook that had been left dangling from the branches of a tree. On 25 January 2003, near the entrance of a cave in Greene Co., Indiana, we found a dead little brown myotis (Myotis lucifugus) frozen to the surface of an icicle about 1 cm in diameter. The bat was attached to the icicle by the fur on its belly and was in a horizontal position, without either its feet or its thumbs touching the icicle. This species frequently collects moisture on the fur during periods of hibernation. Between periods of hibernation, bats are often active and fly about within and sometimes leave hibernacula. Apparently, this bat’s fur was wet when its belly contacted the icicle during flight and the bat froze instantly to the icicle. When the bat was found, regional temperatures had been below freezing for 5 days, with lows reaching -18 C. There are reports of bats entombed in icicles, presumably while hibernating (Schwartz and Schwartz 1981), but we believe this the first reported incident of bat mortality in this manner.

Literature Cited