



AAC Publications

Animal Bite

Oregon, Smith Rock State Park, Lower Gorge

On June 23, Bryan Simon (39) was bitten by a bat (species unknown) while climbing Pet Cemetery, a 5.11b sport route at the Catwalk Cliff of the Lower Gorge. After clipping the fifth bolt, the climber placed a hand under a flake on the left side of the route. Multiple bats flew from the flake, and Simon pulled his hand back to reveal three bleeding wounds, on the middle, ring, and pinkie fingers of his left hand. After asking his belayer to “take,” he lowered to the ground, where they immediately began to irrigate the wounds with clean water. Knowing that bats are carriers of the rabies virus, they hiked out of the gorge and called area hospitals to ascertain which had post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) for rabies available. The climber received the full series of PEP over the next four weeks.

ANALYSIS

Though fairly uncommon, these encounters should be taken seriously. Rabies is a fatal viral disease that must be treated promptly if suspected. Bats are a common reservoir of the rabies virus, and their habitat includes the flakes, cracks, and crevices in climbing areas. If you suspect a bite or scratch by a bat or other mammal that could carry the virus, clean the wound thoroughly with copious amounts of water and/or providone-iodine. Seek medical evaluation as soon as possible, and begin post-exposure prophylaxis if indicated. (Source: R. Bryan Simon.)

Images

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