



7 Indiana Wildlife Myths Busted!

These myths have surfaced and resurfaced over many years. They are often perpetuated by word of mouth. Well, I'm about to **BUST** these myths. You want the truth and not the "Bob's brother's cousin's uncle told me?" Well here you go!

Myth 1: The Indiana DNR has released rattlesnakes to control the turkey population



Busted: This myth has been circulating for many years and it is untrue. The idea is that the rattlesnakes would eat the turkey eggs. However, rattlesnakes rarely eat eggs and are not effective in controlling the turkey population. It has been said that these snakes were dropped from helicopters.....All I have to say about this is, if we have a DNR helicopter readily available...I'd love to ride in it. The Indiana DNR has never released rattlesnakes into the wild (although we have tagged

some snakes and released them back to the same location). In fact, most rattlesnake species in our state are species of special concern or endangered.

Myth 2: I should help an orphaned or injured animal that I find

Busted: Most young animals you see in the wild are not orphaned. In fact, many of the adults leave their young to gather food and rarely abandon them. A young animal should be kept in the wild unless removal is completely necessary. While you may desire to help these animals they are in fact wild....think about how you're going to care for that animal, if it's legal to do so, and the diseases you might acquire from trying to help.



Myth 3: Indiana DNR has released cougars/mountain lions into the wild to control the deer herd

Busted: Indiana DNR has never released any big cats and would never do so without public input. Although, one cougar has been confirmed in Indiana, it is believed to have escaped from a licensed owner. The chances of you seeing a mountain lion in Indiana are virtually nonexistent. The DNR annually receives reports of mountain lion sightings around the state, but typically the evidence points to a housecat, dog, bobcat, or coyote.

Myth 4: Catfish whiskers will sting you.

Busted: Catfish “whiskers” or barbels do not sting a person. In fact, the whiskers are very soft and are used for detecting food in low light conditions where they reside. What can potentially harm you, however, are their spines. They can be very sharp and puncture the skin and are located on the dorsal (backbone) surface and on both sides of the fish. Catfish image from Duane Raver/USFWS.



Myth 5: Bread is good food for ducks and geese



Busted: Bread is not nutritious for these animals and they can become dependent on your feeding. **Do not feed these birds.** You may think they are hungry or in need of food but if they are in fact searching for food they will leave the area. After all you wouldn't want to eat junk food all day; it would give you a stomach ache!

Myth 6: All bats are rabid and will fly and get tangled in your hair

Busted: Although bats can carry rabies, it is unlikely that you will encounter one. Also, bats have superior echolocation abilities that allow them to detect where solid objects are. They would not fly into your head and get tangled. They are actually great to have around as they eat many of those pesky insects.



Myth 7: All water snakes are water moccasins

Busted: Water moccasins are very rare in the state of Indiana and are only found in one small habitat area in southern Indiana. While water snakes may be aggressive, they are not poisonous and will generally retreat if you leave them alone. **Do not kill a snake** because you think it might be dangerous. There is a 99 percent chance they are not venomous and they are a vital part of the ecosystem.