



Naomi d'Alessio (left) gives a tour of a bat roost to State Senator Caroline Menjivar (right) along with bat conservationist Corky Quirk (center, holding a pallid bat).

Photo: Matthew d'Alessio

Teen Lobbies for State Bat

A 13-year-old California girl successfully advocates for pallid bat as a state symbol

By Fiona Tapp



Naomi d'Alessio has always loved bats, and she's had more experience with bats than most adults. She attended a bat conservation and ecology class at San Francisco State University's Sierra Nevada Field Campus as an observer, and enjoyed it so much that she got her rabies vaccine so she could take the class again as a hands-on participant, handling pallid bats (*Antrozous pallidus*).

Using mist nets to capture bats, see them up close, record data, and then release them, was thrilling for d'Alessio, who is in 7th grade. She loved the opportunity to see them up close. "In your hands, you see just how small they are," she says. "That was definitely a surprise."

It's no surprise that d'Alessio is a passionate advocate for bat conservation. She was instrumental in the effort to pass a state bill that made the pallid bat California's official bat in 2023.



Senate Bill 732
designated the pallid
bat as California's
State Bat in 2023.



Working together to protect Critically Endangered Jamaican flower bats at Stony Hill Cave.

Photo: Loraine Lundquist

the benefits and virtues of bats, including their impact on local agriculture. “Bats help eat the mosquitoes and other pests that are not just nuisances to us,” she says. “Bats eat pests from crops, saving California farmers [money] in agricultural losses from insect pests. So, we owe a lot to them.”

“It takes a lot of work, but if you have something that you are passionate about and you’re willing to commit, you can make a difference in the world.” –Naomi d’Alessio

At just 13 years of age, this young Los Angeles-based conservationist isn’t done yet. In consultation with the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, she wants to explore other protections that will benefit bats of all kinds and lead to further conservation efforts in her state and beyond.

She has a message for other young people who wish to follow in her footsteps. “I know that there are probably a lot of people who think that someone can’t find a way to get a bill passed, but it is important to acknowledge that it’s not impossible,” she says. “It takes a lot of work, but if you have something that you are passionate about and you’re willing to commit, you can make a difference in the world.”

Initially, she wanted to work towards a series of bat protection measures. When she approached leaders like State Senator Caroline Menjivar, they suggested making the pallid bat a state symbol would be a better first step. So d’Alessio got to work; she came home after school to present via Zoom to state officials several afternoons a week for months and even traveled to the California State Capitol to testify before the legislature twice. Her work paid off when Senate Bill 732 passed and named the pallid bat the California State Bat in 2023.

The impact of one young voice

She hopes the bill’s passing will increase public awareness about bats. “I am hoping that when people learn there is a state bat and the state is celebrating that, it will encourage them to learn more about bats,” she says.

It’s easy to see how these change-makers were influenced by d’Alessio’s advocacy when you listen to her passionately extolling