

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT BATS

What are bats?

Bats are the only flying mammals. They have well-furred bodies with naked, transparent wings. Their wings are a membrane spread across elongated arm bones and fingers. An average wingspread is six inches. They also have tail membranes. Some species can fly distances up to 200 miles. To start flying, a bat drops from its perch. If it is on the ground it usually crawls to some height until it can drop into the air.

What is the most abundant bat in North America?

The little brown bat which weight about ½ ounce and 3 ½ inches long when full grown. It huts insects in the air and while crawling on the ground may catch beetles, crickets and other insects.

We have all heard the old saying, "*Blind as a bat.*" How blind are bats?

All bats can see, some see better than us. Some tropical, nectar feeding bats have very large eyes that enable them to see flowers and fruit at night. In most bats, vision and smell are the predominant senses. Many bats are able to detect objects as thin as human hair in total darkness. They have a sophisticated echolocation system. These bats emit high-frequency sounds that bounce back to their ears, enabling them to detect objects in total darkness.

How do bats hunt for food?

Several bats communicate and navigate with high-frequency sounds. Hunting bats may detect prey by echolocation. While flying, bats emit a continuous series of supersonic sounds through their nose or open mouth. The sounds bounce off objects and are picked up by the bats' sensitive ears. Using sound alone, these bats "see" everything but color, and in total darkness can detect objects as small as mosquitoes which they feed on.

Are bats solitary animals?

No. Most bats are highly social and live in colonies. Sexual cycles are synchronized and most mating occurs over a period of a few weeks.

Where are bats during the day?

During the day bats sleep in trees, rock crevices, caves, and buildings. Bats are nocturnal (active at night), leaving daytime roosts at dusk. Upon leaving their roost, bat fly to a stream, pond, or lake where they dip their lower jaw into the water while still in flight and take a drink. After drinking bats forage for insects.

When is the best time to see bats?

Bats are seen at dawn and dusk or can be detected by the presence of their feces, which readily disintegrate into tiny, shiny fragments of insect pieces. Mouse droppings, in contrast, remain formed.

What do bats in the United States eat?

With the exception of three species of nectar-feeding bats that live along the Mexican border of Arizona and Texas, all bats in the United States and Canada are insectivorous. Worldwide, bats are the major predators of night-flying insects such as mosquitoes. Some bats can catch up to 600 mosquitoes in an hour and consume their weight in insects in one night.

What part of the world do most bats live?

The majority of bats inhabit tropical forests. About 70% of bats eat insects and many tropical species feed exclusively on fruit or nectar. A few are carnivorous, hunting small vertebrates, such as fish, frogs, mice, and birds.

How many species of bats are in the United States and Canada?

Some 40 species live in the United States and Canada. Worldwide there are 900 species of bats.

Where do most bats live in the United States?

Bats can be found living in almost any conceivable shelter, though they are best known for living in caves. Many species have adapted to living in buildings as their natural habitat has been destroyed.

How many offspring does a female bat have in a year?

Bats, for their size, are the slowest reproducing mammals on earth. On average, a female bat rears only one young yearly. Most bats that live in the United States mate in the fall just before entering hibernation. The young have reached adult size by three months of age.

How old do bats live to be?

Bats are long-lived with a life-span of over 20 years.

What is the most effective control method for bats?

The only effective control method is exclusion. Effective bat proofing requires placement of fine mesh over entry and exit sites, so that the netting serves as a one-way exit or by caulking.

Where do bats enter buildings?

Bat colonies living in buildings often enter through predictable routes. Any space as large as a quarter of an inch wide by an inch and a half or more long is a possibility. Close inspection of suspected entry points usually will reveal brown stains from body oils where the bats squeeze in and out and possibly a few mouse-like droppings adhering to the building just below.

Are there vampire bats that suck your blood?

There are only three species of vampire bats that live in Central and South America. They do not suck blood, instead they make a small incision with their razor sharp teeth and then lap up the blood.

Do bats carry rabies?

Yes, rabid bats have been found in every state except Hawaii. Bats are the animal most likely to be rabid in Los Angeles County. About 10% of the bats tested by the Los Angeles County Department of Health Services have rabies. However most bats tested by the Department of Health Services are sick.

How can the risk of bat rabies be reduced?

Avoiding bats is essential to reducing the risk of rabies in humans. Bats should not be picked up or otherwise handled.

Remember, bats are very beneficial by nightly eating their weight in insects. They prey on several species of pest insects including wasps, mosquitoes, and moths.