



Fossil finds confirm that bats have been on earth for more than 50 million years.

WING TIPS ABOUT *BATS*

Bats are flying mammals in the order Chiroptera. The forelimbs of bats are webbed and developed as wings, making them the only mammals naturally capable of true and sustained flight. About 70 percent of bats are insectivores. Most of the rest are fruit eaters. Bats are present throughout most of the world and perform vital ecological roles such as pollinating flowers and dispersing fruit seeds. Many tropical plants depend entirely on bats for the distribution of their seeds.

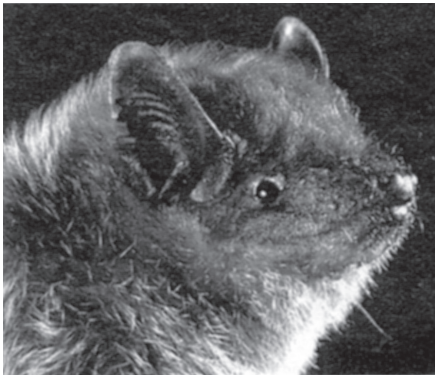
The two local species listed here, Big and Little Brown Bats, eat an astonishing amount of insects daily. They are some of the most significant insect control agents in our environment.



Little Brown Bat, 2.5"- 4" long.
Big Brown Bat, 4"- 5" long.

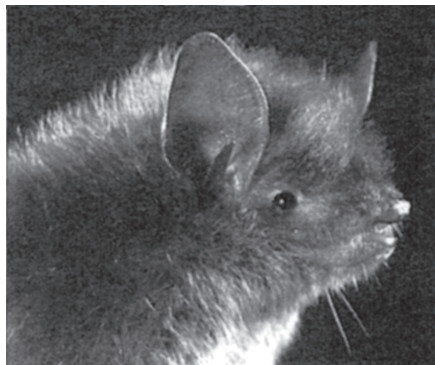


These amazing little fellows have received a lot of bad press. Myths about vampires and their causing illness are a couple of reasons. The **Truth** about bats is that they really control disease by eliminating undesirable insects. And they need our *help* due to habitat loss. Bat houses answer this requirement nicely.



BIG BROWN BAT

- Big Brown Bats are insectivorous, eating many kinds of night-flying insects including mosquitoes, moths, beetles, and wasps which they capture in flight. This causes the sudden, frequent changes in direction. Big brown bats are nocturnal, roosting during the day in hollow trees, beneath loose tree bark, in the crevices of rocks or in man-made structures such as attics, barns, old buildings, window shutters and bat houses. Big brown bats navigate through the night skies by use of echolocation, producing ultrasonic sounds through the mouth or nose. Big brown bats are one of the few bats to produce audible sound during flight. Its voice is a click or a sound like escaping steam.



LITTLE BROWN BAT

- Little Brown Bats are insectivores, eating moths, wasps, beetles, gnats, mosquitoes, midges and mayflies, among others. Since many of their preferred meals are insects with an aquatic life stage, such as mosquitoes, they prefer to roost near water. They echo locate to find their prey. Often they will catch larger prey with a wingtip, transfer it to a cup formed by their tail, then eat it - smaller prey are usually just caught in the mouth. They often use the same routes over and over again every night, flying 3-6 meters high above water or among trees. An adult can sometimes fill its stomach in 15 minutes; young have more difficulty. If they do not catch any food, they will enter a torpor similar to hibernation that day, awakening at night to hunt again.

Sometimes bats will get lost and confused in a home. When they land, they can be gently picked up in a well-gloved hand or a container, and set free. Use caution and common sense when handling wild creatures.

Photos: Merlin D. Tuttle, Bat House Builder's Handbook.

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