

# BAT-TASTIC

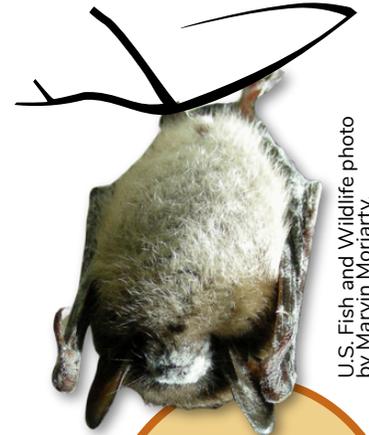
## Exploring Bats & Habitats

### Introduction to Bats

Bats are the only mammals that truly fly (instead of gliding like a flying squirrel). They belong to the order Chiroptera, a word that means “hand wing.” Bats are nocturnal, which means they sleep during the day and are active at night looking for food.

Almost all bats in the United States and Canada are insectivores – that means they eat insects. However, there are three species of bats that eat pollen, nectar, and fruit. Even though bats can see about as well as we can, they find these insects mainly through echolocation. They produce high frequency sounds that bounce off objects around them, telling them how close or far, fast or slow, and big or small something is.

Bats like to live in natural areas like caves, forests, and cliffs, but they can also use buildings, old mines, and bridges as places to live and raise their young. Some bats hibernate over the winter. Others migrate instead.



U.S. Fish and Wildlife photo by Marvin Moriarty.

A single little brown bat can eat up to **1,000** mosquito-sized insects a night!

USFWS photo by R. Andrew King.



Many bats use caves as habitats. Different groups manage caves to help protect the bats inside.

### Why are bats important?

Besides just being cool, bats do a lot of important things to help humans. Because they can eat so many insects, they can help control insects that humans think are pests - like the mosquitoes that can carry diseases or the insects that eat our crops. Some bats also help pollinate crops and spread their seeds.



### How can we help bats?

- Plant our yards with native plants and trees. These attract insects that bats eat, and some bats use the trees to rest (called “roosting”) and raise their young.
- Avoid pesticides and other chemicals in our yards when we can.
- Keep cats inside, especially at night. Cats will eat bats if they can.
- Obey cave closure signs and visitation rules. Those rules are to keep the bats safe.



# TRY THIS: Be a Wildlife Biologist

## Career Exploration

A wildlife biologist is a scientist who studies animals. These biologists might study how an animal eats, where it lives, or how it behaves. Wildlife biologists who specialize in bats might study the caves and trees the bats live in. They might research diseases that affect bats, like white-nose syndrome. They might study how bats use echolocation. There's lots to learn about bats!



With an adult, go outside to a safe location and look around. Imagine this place as a habitat for bats. Does this habitat have food? water? a safe place for bats to sleep? a safe place for bats to fly? Draw or describe what you see that would make this place a good home for bats.

Now think about what might be bad for bats in this location (for example, predators like cats, lots of buildings they might fly into, or few plants that attract insects). Describe or draw what you see.

After completing your observations, what do you think? Would this location be a good habitat for bats? Why or why not?

**Rate this job!** Based on what you learned and what you did, circle or color the number of stars you give this job.



Why did you give it this rating?