

Animals of the World: Mammals



THE BAT

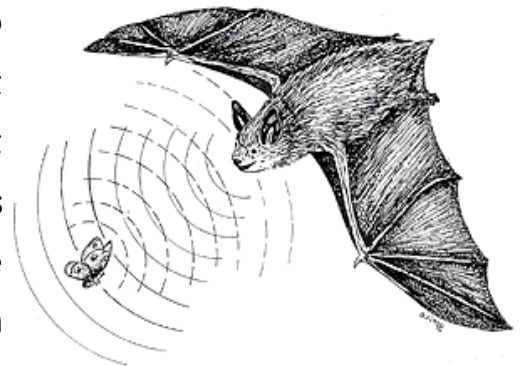


Bats are nocturnal mammals and the only mammal that can fly. They are generally not frowned upon by humans, as they have earned a bad reputation because of their relationship to vampire stories or myths, and also because they are mistaken for the rodent family.



Even though most people are repulsed by bats, what they do not know about them is that they play a very important role in different ecosystems because of their food activities. They are essential in the pollination of plants, and they help in the control of the bug and insect population.

Bats have echolocation skills that allow them to find food in the dark. To echolocate, they emit sound waves through the nose and mouth. It bounces off the object and returns to the bat's ears, which upon listening can determine the object's location, shape, and size. They can even detect the smallest objects or the tiniest insects that they like to eat.



When it comes to identifying a bat, it's not difficult because they all have the same body characteristics: small faces, small ears, and large wings. But, although they are all very similar, more than 1,100 species have been identified. The species vary significantly according to their size and location. The smallest bats weigh about an ounce and are about two inches long, and the largest can weigh about three pounds and be five feet long.

As for food, only one species of bats, known as blood-suckers, consume blood from other animals. Over 70% of bats feed on bugs and insects. The remaining 30% have a diet based on various fruits that are in season; they also consume nectar and pollen to survive. The skill of echolocation is important because it helps them detect the movements and vibrations that surround them, giving the bat an advantage over their prey, which they hold with their tiny and sharp teeth.



Bats hang upside down because it is a way to hide from predators; It is also their way of resting during the day because they are active during the night and go out looking for food. They are creatures that are adaptable to any place, so they reside all over the world, especially in dark places that feel safe from predators, such as caves, attics, and chimneys, among others. They also live in trees and under bridges, but these are not as safe, and it does not help them in winter since their skin cools down very easily. This is why they are concentrated in large quantities in warmer places.

Bat's predators are snakes, raccoons, opossums, and tarantulas. Cats are also known to kill bats, not to eat them but to play with them already dead. The largest predators of bats are humans. Humans do not like having these animals around them. People kill them because they are afraid of them, they consider bats a type of rodent, they live in caves that humans use for their recreation, and because of the risk of diseases that they can transmit.

Regarding the above, it is important to make people aware of the value that these animals have for the ecosystem, that they are not dangerous, and that there are ways to relocate them without having to get rid of them.



Name _____

Date _____



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Answer the questions.



1. Why are bats repulsive to humans? Use the information in the text to answer.

2. Why are bats important to the ecosystem?

3. What important skill do bats have, and how does it help them?

4. What is echolocation?

5. Do all bats feed the same? Explain your answer.



Name _____

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7. Why are there some places that are not safe for bats?

8. Why are bats concentrated in large numbers and in dark places?

9. What are the bats' predators?

10. Would you tell people about the value of bats? Explain your answer.

