

Bats



DID YOU KNOW:

Bats are the only mammals that are capable of true flight. Bats hang upside down and use gravity to gain speed to begin flight. There are 14 species of bats in Missouri, although none of them are fruit-eaters or vampire bats.

EATING HABITS:

Our local bats eat flying insects. Some bats will eat half their weight -- as many as 600 flying insects -- each night. Before feasting on insects, bats often skim over a pond to grab a drink of water while in flight. Bats have good eyesight, but to find insects they use echolocation, which is similar to sonar. The bat emits a high-pitched sound that bounces off the insect, and the echo returns to the bat's ear. The bat usually catches the insect with its mouth but can scoop it up with its wing or tail and then eat it.

THE YOUNG:

Baby bats are born in early summer. Kansas City area bat species have one or two babies, called pups. Mom keeps them hidden in a cave or old building. The babies drink milk from mother until they are strong fliers and can catch insects on their own, usually in about five to six weeks.

HABITAT (HOME):

The Little Brown Bat and the Big Brown Bat live in small groups that may roost in buildings. The Red Bat and Hoary Bat are solitary and live more often in wooded areas and roost in trees. They need safe, dark areas to spend the day sleeping. Around dusk, bats go hunting.



DEFENSIVE HABITS:

Bats are shy. If threatened, they fly away. Bats move slowly when they are cold. If a bat is on the ground, it may be because it blew out of a tree on a cold night and is unable to crawl to safety. Bats in the Kansas City area can carry rabies, although it is rare.. If a bat doesn't fly away from you, leave it alone and contact your area animal control office or the Lakeside Nature Center for advice.

UNUSUAL FACTS:

- Bats are not supernatural creatures as some myths suggest. They are unique fascinating creatures that play an important role in controlling insect numbers.
- Because insects aren't available in winter, bats hibernate. They reduce their heart rate from 500 beats per minute (when flying) to about 15 beats per minute. Their body temperature drops from 100 degrees to the temperature of the hibernation site (usually 40 to 60 degrees).
- Our city-loving Little Brown Bat can live to be 30 years old, and during its lifetime may eat more than 5 million flying insects, including those troublesome mosquitoes!