

Let's Learn About



BATS





Are you afraid of bats? If so, you're not alone. According to a poll by Animal Planet, vampire bats are the third-most feared animals in the world (behind wolves and gorillas).

Don't worry, though; bats aren't as scary as you might think. For one thing, the infamous vampire bat only lives in Central and South America. Contrary to popular belief, they don't suck blood and they rarely attack people. Rather, vampire bats use their very sharp teeth to make a small bite on an animal and lick the blood. Each vampire bat only drinks about an ounce of blood a night.

Why do they do that? Vampire bats live on only red blood cells, so eating anything other than blood wouldn't fuel their bodies. Fortunately, of the more than 1,100 species of bats in the world, only 3 are vampire bats.

Bats, the only mammals that can fly, make up approximately one-fourth of all the mammals on Earth. A mammal is a warm-blooded animal which has hair or fur, gives birth to live young, and feeds its young with milk from its body. So bats and humans are similar, because we are both mammals.

Bats are divided into two groups—Megabats which are large and feed mostly on fruits and Microbats, which are small and eat insects, frogs, fish, lizard, birds, or blood. Scientists believe Megabats are more closely related to primates (including humans) than to microbats.

The largest bat in the world is a megabat known as the flying fox or fruit bat. His wingspan is 5 to 6 feet across and he has a body of around a foot (12 inches) long. The smallest is known as the bumblebee bat, which you could literally mistake for a bumblebee because of its size.

The scientific name for bats is *chiroptera* which comes from the Greek words *cheir* (hand) and *pteron* (wing). It literally means hand-wing.

There's a reason for that. A bat's wings are made of the bats arm and finger bones covered by two thin layers of skin. These membranes make up 95% of the bat's body and go all the way down the body and partway down its legs.

Bats flap their spread-out digits (fingers) to fly, unlike birds which flap their entire forelimbs, but the wings don't just flap up and down. They also propel the bat forward in a motion similar to a swimming butterfly stroke. This forward motion is called propulsion.

Bats use their wings for other purposes, too. They wrap their wings around their bodies to hold in body heat and keep warm. They also wrap the wings around fruit or prey to hold it while eating.

Approximately 70% of bats feed on insects, but some species eat fruit, fish, lizards, and frogs. The species who eat frogs can tell safe food from poisonous by the sound of the male frog's call.

The average bat can eat more than 600 bugs per hour, and some species can eat 1,200 mosquitoes in the same amount of time. To eat as much as a bat, you would have to eat 20 pizzas in a single night.

Bats find all those bugs by echolocation. Despite the myth that bats are blind, they have fine eyesight for seeing during the day. However, they are nocturnal, which means they are active at night. This makes it easier for them to avoid predators while hunting for insects.

Echolocation provides bats the means to 'see' their prey in the dark. The bats make rapid, high-pitched squeaks with their mouths or noses called ultra-sounds. Too high for humans to hear, bats listen for the sounds to echo back to them in order to locate prey and to locate objects around them.

Bats have the best hearing of all land mammals. Their ears are often huge compared to their bodies, unlike tiny human ears. Bats can hear sounds between 20 Hz and 120,000 Hz. To give you an idea of what a range that is, humans can hear sounds between 20 Hz and 20,000 Hz and dogs can hear from 40 Hz to 60,000 Hz.

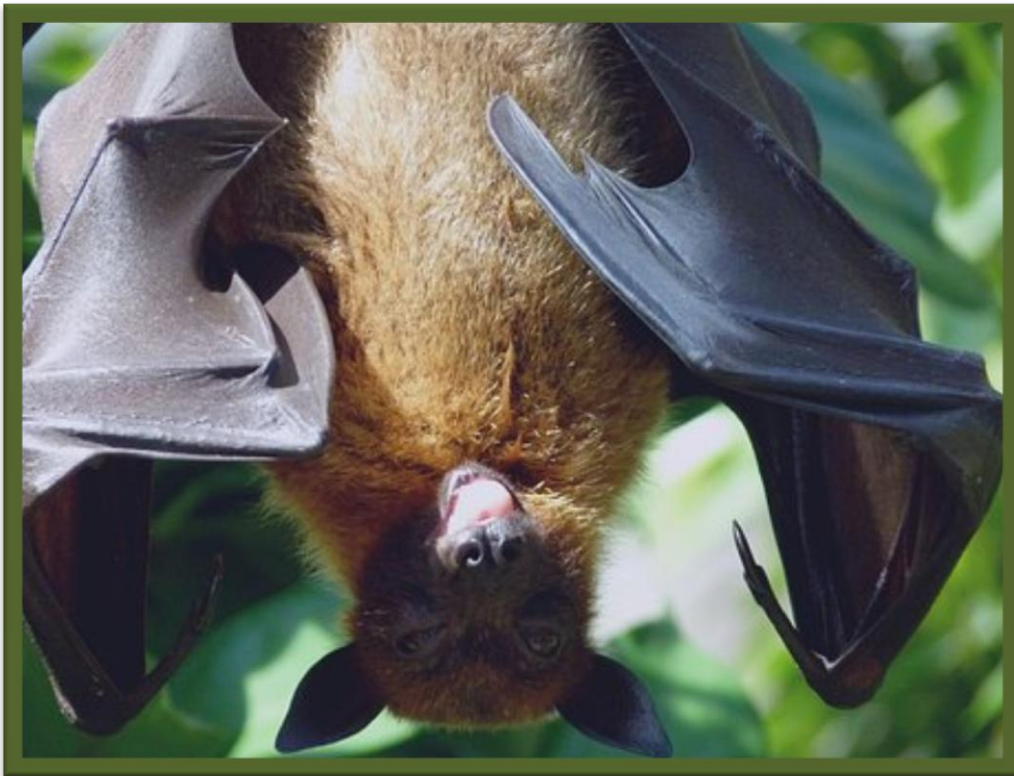


During the day, most bats roost upside down in caves or treetops, but they've also been known to sleep in mines, under bridges, and even in old barns or buildings. Some species roost in groups of 1 or 2, but most live in huge groups. The largest bat colony in the world is in Bracken Cave, Texas, where as many as 20 million Mexican free-tailed bats live.

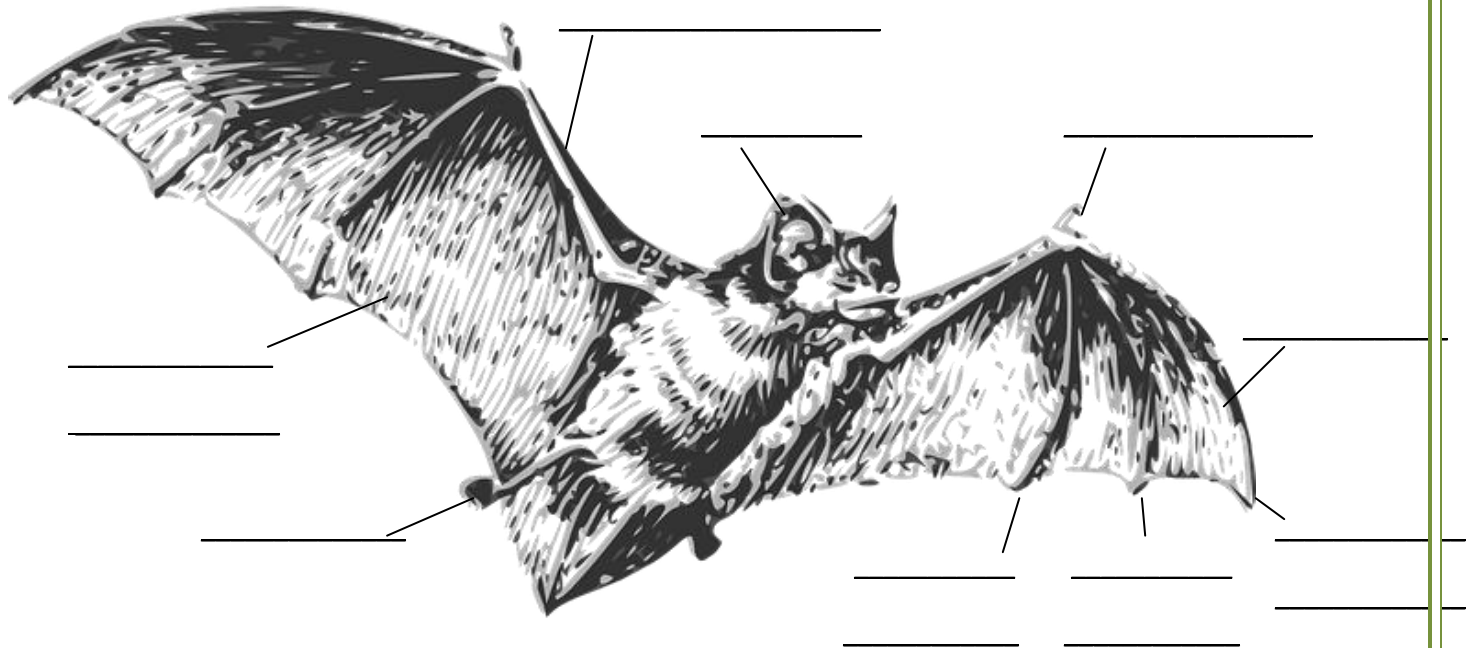
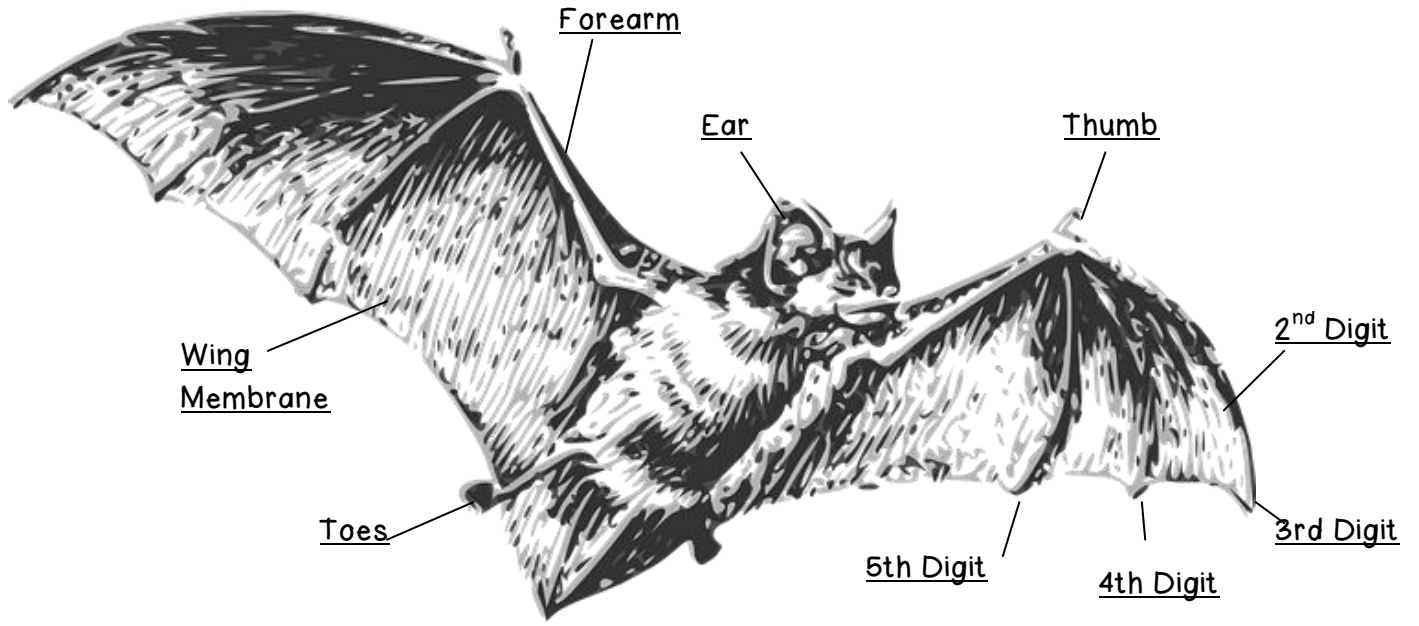
Bat pregnancies can last from 40 days to 6 months, depending on the species. Bats usually have only one pup per year, though sometimes they have twins. Bat babies are born without fur, but they have strong claws and legs so

they can hang on their mama when she's roosting and to their cave roof when their mama is gone. Bat pups grow up quickly. Some species have pups that fly and hunt within a month of being born.

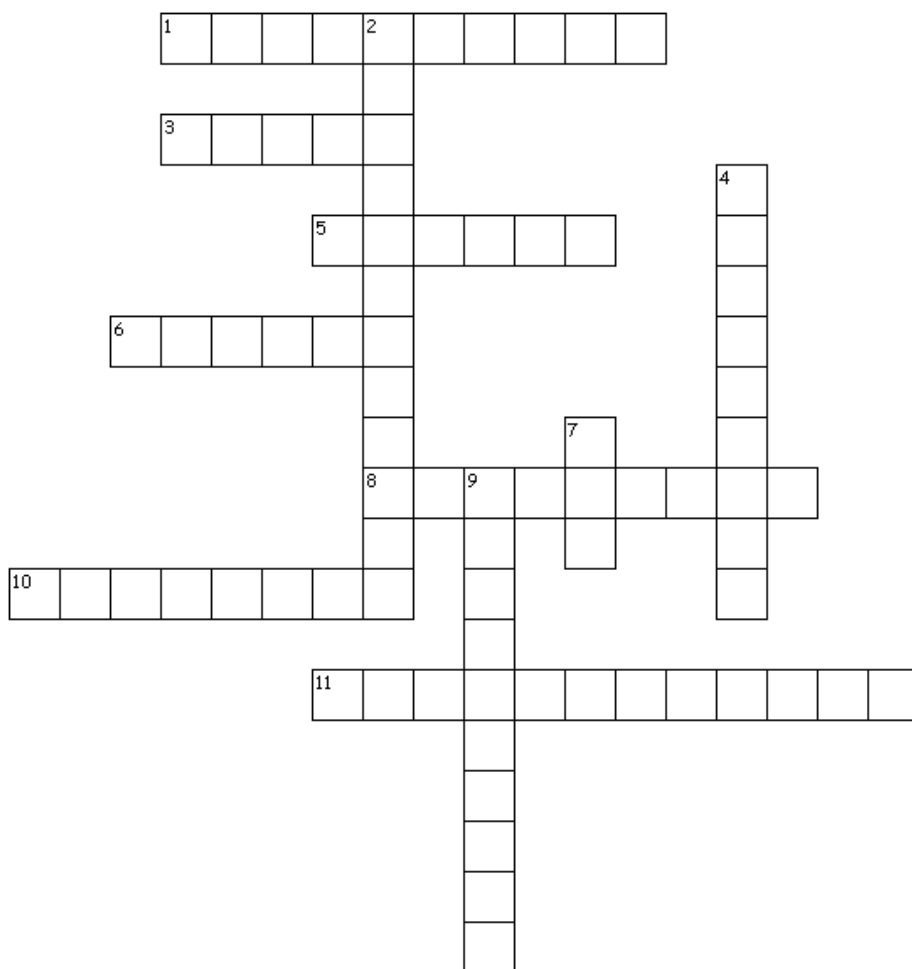
You don't have to be afraid of bats. Though they live on every continent except Antarctica, they won't suck your blood, land in your hair, or cause you bad luck. Paleontologists believe bats have existed on earth for more than 35 million years—longer than humans have—and they serve an important role in our ecosystem. Bats are pollinators, dispersing seeds that grow into nearly 300 plant species, such as bananas and avocados. They are also natural insect control. Next time you see a bat, thank him for eating all those mosquitoes.



# Bat Anatomy



# Bat Crossword



**Across**

- 1. the forward motion of a bat's flight
- 3. sleep
- 5. warm-blooded animal with fur and live young
- 6. fingers
- 8. active at night
- 10. large bats that feed on fruit
- 11. using sound and echos to locate objects

**Down**

- 2. high-pitched sounds used in echolocation
- 4. Small bats that feed on insects and small animals
- 7. baby bat
- 9. scientific name for bat

Word Bank		
chiroptera	mammal	roost
nocturnal	microbats	ultrasounds
pup	propulsion	megabats
digits	echolocation	



# Bat Word Search

Z X S C N R G F C K Y V M A L  
Z X A M T R F H T L R R E R R  
Q F W V I Q M R X N B K G E T  
N O I T A C O L O H C E A T H  
S A I Q X V R I I M S R B P Q  
P D X G R I S O A G U N A O R  
T X N E R L Y M B J H H T R H  
T S V U U M M J V A C M S I H  
R C O P O A F A Y B T F V H M  
X P O O L S T I G I D S A C V  
H R O B R F A R S Y T F R O A  
P L N O C T U R N A L P D S S  
T D F A T N Z I T J O U R Y P  
U K Z F X N O B C L A P A Z O  
X S A H V Y L Y F X U P J F G

CHIROPTERA  
MAMMAL  
NOCTURNAL  
ROOST

DIGITS  
MEGABATS  
PROPULSION  
ULTRASOUNDS

ECHOLOCATION  
MICROBATS  
PUP



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