

BATS

of Utah

Bats are the most maligned and misunderstood of all mammals. Negative misconceptions surround bats despite the fact that most people know them only as mysterious fluttering objects observed at dusk on summer evenings. Mysteries aside, bats are fairly innocuous to humans. Bats don't attack people to entangle themselves in their hair; they really aren't interested in people at all. As mammals, they have hair, regulate their body temperatures internally, and nurse their young. Bats are the only mammals that fly, and although they have eyes and see very well, they also have the ability to navigate in the absence of sufficient light by using sonar. This sensory system is known as echolocation. It is this constant reaction to incoming echoes that makes a bat in flight appear to stutter or falter, when in reality bats are superb fliers.

Research is updated frequently, but at latest count, there are 1,466 bat species worldwide, 154 species in North America, and 18 species that reside in Utah. All 18 of Utah's bats eat insects. In fact, these bats are perhaps the most significant predators of night flying insects, giving them an important function in the ecosystem. During the day some bats roost in caverns such as caves and abandoned mines, while others prefer to roost in crevices and hollows of trees. Recent bat research indicates that numbers of some bat species in Utah may be declining, most likely from the loss of their natural roosting habitat. In light of this information, it is important to note that timber harvesting practices and abandoned mine closures can be undertaken in ways that benefit bats. Old and dead trees can be spared on logged sites to allow them to be used as bat roosts, and abandoned mines can be gated to keep people out while allowing bats continued access.

Bats should be admired rather than feared. They are capable of truly acrobatic displays as they forage for insects each night. With a minimum of effort, we can watch bats maneuvering around and over trees in the neighborhood, diving at moths under street lamps, or passing to and fro in the back yard. The emergence of a group of bats from a roost is truly a spectacular sight, with bats flying in close proximity to each other while avoiding collisions with other bats as well as objects in the landscape.



(Center Image: Pallid Bat with centipede. All photos supplied by J. Scott Altenbach)



Myotis ciliolabrum
Western Small-footed Myotis
 Avg. mass: 4 grams
 Avg. wingspan: 220 mm
 Young per year: 1



Lasionycteris noctivagans
Silver-haired Bat
 Avg. mass: 12 grams
 Avg. wingspan: 290 mm
 Young per year: 2



Corynorhinus townsendii
Townsend's Big-eared Bat
 Avg. mass: 11 grams
 Avg. wingspan: 280 mm
 Young per year: 1



Eptesicus fuscus
Big Brown Bat
 Avg. mass: 17 grams
 Avg. wingspan: 340 mm
 Young per year: 1 (twins in eastern US)



Euderma maculatum
Spotted Bat
 Avg. mass: 14 grams
 Avg. wingspan: 345 mm
 Young per year: 1



Antrozous pallidus
Pallid Bat (Center Image)
 Avg. mass: 19 grams
 Avg. wingspan: 380 mm
 Young per year: 1-2 (generally twins)

Key To Symbols

| Food Types | | | | | |
|----------------|----------------------------|---------------|----------|--------------|-----------|
| | | | | | |
| Flying Insects | Ground-dwelling Arthropods | | | | |
| Habitat Types | | | | | |
| | | | | | |
| Pinyon Juniper | Pine, Oak & Aspen | Desert Shrubs | Riparian | All Habitats | |
| Roost Types | | | | | |
| | | | | | |
| Mines & Caves | Trees | Crevices | Cliffs | Bridges | Buildings |



Idionycteris phyllotis
Allen's Lappet-browed Bat
 Avg. mass: 11 grams
 Avg. wingspan: 330 mm
 Young per year: 1



Myotis thysanodes
Fringed Myotis
 Avg. mass: 5-7 grams
 Avg. wingspan: 270-300 mm
 Young per year: 1



Nyctinomops macrotis
Big Free-tailed Bat
 Avg. mass: 26 grams
 Avg. wingspan: 425 mm
 Young per year: 1



Tadarida brasiliensis
Brazilian Free-tailed Bat
 Avg. mass: 10 grams
 Avg. wingspan: 300 mm
 Young per year: 1



Lasiurus blossevillei
Western Red Bat
 Avg. mass: 12 grams
 Avg. wingspan: 280 mm
 Young per year: 1-4 (3-4 is typical)



Pipistrellus hesperus
Western Pipetrelle
 Avg. mass: 4 grams
 Avg. wingspan: 200 mm
 Young per year: 2



Lasiurus cinereus
Hoary Bat
 Avg. mass: 25 grams
 Avg. wingspan: 400 mm
 Young per year: 2