

# Bats Are Good Neighbors



*Courtesy of Field Notes, Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary System*



There are 40 species of bats in North America and none deserve its negative reputation for getting tangled in people's hair, drinking blood, or always carrying rabies. Less than 3% of bats sampled with rabies are found to carry the virus. In fact, bats can be good neighbors and a vital resource for controlling pests and pollinating flowers.

Bats are furred, warm-blooded mammals with body lengths of 3-6 inches and wingspans varying from 8-12 inches. Most bats hunt flying insects and navigate by emitting pulses of sound through the mouth. Their sensitive ears hear the echoes reflected from even tiny insects. This allows them to steer towards prey and avoid obstacles. Bats also have keen eyesight on which they rely for long-distance orientation.

Bats in North America eat primarily insects such as cut worms, corn borer moths, potato beetles and mosquitoes.

A single bat can catch up to 600 mosquitoes in just one hour and consume up to 3,000 insects per night. Given this appetite, you can easily see why bats are the most important natural controller of insect pests that fly at night.

Unfortunately, nearly 40% of America's bats are on the Federal Endangered Species List.

Destruction or disturbance of bat roosting sites (hollow trees, old buildings, barns and caves) and pesticide use targeted at the insects upon which bats feed have threatened these creatures. Because most bats raise only one "pup" per year, their populations do not increase quickly.

You can help to ensure the survival of bat species in your area by:

1) Supporting bat conservation efforts to protect existing natural nest sites.

2) Mounting "bat boxes" to provide additional nesting and roosting sites. A bat box is a simple wooden structure much like a bird nesting box. It can be placed in a variety of locations, but bats prefer sites that are a few hundred yards from streams, lakes or wetlands. If conditions are right on your property, an invitation to bats will be rewarded with hours of insect control.

This year, incorporate bats into your pest management plan. Both you and bats will benefit.



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