



Big Brown BAT



Bats are vital to Washington's ecosystems. Although they are one of our most fascinating native mammals, they are probably the least studied and understood. All of our bats are insect eaters, consuming millions, many of which are pests. They find insects and navigate in the dark by "echolocation," a type of radar system. They call out notes, usually far above human range of hearing, and "listen" for the returning echoes that tell them what is front of them. This ability is so refined that they have no trouble "seeing" tiny insects and catching them in total darkness.

Washington has 16 of the world's more than 900 species of bats. The most significant threats to bat survival are persecution by humans and loss of habitat. Vandalism and disturbance of roosting caves, maternity colonies, loss of tree snags, and careless use of pesticides all seriously threaten remaining populations.

Bats live in many different habitats, including: caves, abandoned mines, cliffs, rock crevices, wood piles, under loose tree bark, in dead tree hollows, under bridges, and in barns, attics, and other human structures. In winter when insects become scarce, bats either migrate south to warmer climes or hibernate. They may sleep in winter roosts, or "hibernacula", for up to six months, living off the fat they have built up in the summer.

Females generally give birth to a single pup sometime between mid May to mid July. Born hairless and helpless, the babies mature quickly. Their ears and eyes open within hours and they learn to fly in three to six weeks.

What Can You Do to Help Bats?

- Do not disturb roosting bats
- Provide habitat, whenever and wherever possible:
 - Leave hollow trees and snags
 - Protect forested areas, wetlands and cave systems
 - Put up bat houses
 - Minimize your use of pesticides
 - Support bat research
 - Support bat conservation groups