

Myths and Facts About Bats

- Contrary to popular belief, bats are not blind and they do not try to become tangled in hair.
- Bats are not related to rodents. In fact, fruit bats are more closely related to primates. Bats are extremely intelligent. Some bats have a highly complicated social structure that includes over 20 different vocalizations.
- Bats are the only flying mammals in the world.
- There are over 1,000 species of bats, comprising 1/4 of the world's mammal species. They are found everywhere in the world except in the most extreme desert and polar regions.
- Seventy percent of all bat species eat insects, most of the remaining 30% eat fruit, pollen and nectar.
- Bats are vital to the ecosystem! Fruit bats bring us over 450 commercial products, including 80 medicines. The seed dispersal and pollination activities of fruit and nectar eating bats are vital to the survival of rain forests. Seeds dropped by tropical bats account for up to 95% of forest re-growth on cleared land. Night blooming plants and trees depend on nectar eating bats for pollination.
- Bats in the US eat millions of tons of insects annually. Alarmingly, bats are disappearing worldwide. They are now considered the most endangered land mammal in North America.
- Bats are such unique mammals that scientists have placed them in a group of their own, the Chiroptera, which means hand-wing. Bats are of the grand order, Archonta, grouped together with monkeys and flying lemurs.
- Most bats navigate with high-frequency sounds. Using sound alone, they can detect obstacles as fine as a human hair in total darkness. The sophistication of their unique echolocation system surpasses current scientific knowledge!
- Bats carefully groom themselves. Bats are among the cleanest of animals and are also exceptionally resistant to disease.
- Bats, for their size, are the slowest reproducing mammals on earth, making them susceptible to endangerment. Mother bats have been known to adopt each other's young.
- Bats are exceptionally long-lived, some species can live up to 34 years!
- Studies of bats have contributed to the development of navigational aids for the blind, birth control and artificial insemination techniques, vaccine production and drug testing, and a better understanding of low-temperature surgical procedures.

Thank you to Amanda Lollar and Bat World for the information provided in this brochure!

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Nebraska Wildlife Rehab, Inc.



Living with...

Bats



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Omaha, NE 68124-0122
Hotline: (402) 341-8619
www.nebraskawildliferehab.org

Nebraska Wildlife Rehab, Inc. receives over 200 bats each year from the Omaha area, and provides advice for many people wanting to exclude bats from their homes, or attract them to their yards. About 12 species of bats are commonly found in Nebraska, and about half of these are common in the Omaha area. All of the bats in Nebraska are insectivores, relying solely on insects to survive. These bats are extremely beneficial, controlling many pests that destroy crops and transmit disease in our area.

Bats and Rabies

Although the incidence of rabies in bats is extremely low, less than one-half of one percent, bats can carry this disease. Unlike some other animals, sick bats are not confrontational; they generally search for a secluded spot to die. According to the Center for Disease Control, people cannot get rabies from just seeing a bat in an attic, a cave or at a distance. In addition, people cannot get rabies from having contact with bat feces, blood, or urine or from touching a bat on its fur. If you are ever bitten by a bat, or if saliva from a bat gets into your eyes, nose or mouth, seek medical attention immediately. If possible, the bat should be captured and sent to a laboratory for testing. Bats that are found in a room with a person who cannot rule out physical contact (i.e. a sleeping person, a child, a mentally disabled person or an intoxicated person) will need to be tested for rabies. If contact has occurred or is suspected, call your personal physician or local health department immediately.



What To Do If You Find a Bat

Never handle a bat with your bare hands and do not attempt to rehabilitate the bat on your own. If you find a bat indoors or outside, please use the following guidelines.

Bats Inside A Building

A bat that is found indoors is most likely to be a crevice-dwelling species. Oftentimes they will find their way out through an open window after dark, if the room the bat occupies is closed off from the

rest of the house. If this is not an option, and if you feel confident that you can move the animal without physically touching it or injuring it, please do the following:

- Wait until the animal is motionless. A bat that is flying is almost impossible to catch, and you have a greater chance of injuring the bat if you attempt to capture it while it is airborne. In addition, bats that are caught while flying frequently panic and attempt to bite. Wait until the bat lands and is still.
- Contain the bat. Quietly approach the bat, and wearing thick gloves or using a thick towel, gather up the bat and place it into a box or similar container with a lid. You may also place a box, waste can, coffee can or similar object over the bat where it has landed. Next, take a piece of cardboard and gently slide it between the box and the surface the bat is on (i.e. floor, wall or ceiling). Keeping the cardboard in place, gently turn the container right side up. *Note: Do not place the bat in a bird cage or container with small openings. Bats are very intelligent and can easily squeeze through a 1/4 x 1/2 inch crack.*
- If the bat is captured during the day, call NWRI for assistance. If the bat is captured at night, release the bat outside as described below.
- Release the bat outdoors at nightfall. Once the bat has been captured, take the container outdoors. Take a flashlight and a towel or gloves with you in case the bat has problems flying away. Find an elevated area, lift the box over your head, and tilt it to the side so the bat can fly out. The bat will not be able to fly out of a grounded container in a vertical position. ***Note: Do not release the bat during the day or during cold or bad weather. Instead, contact NWRI for further assistance.***
- Watch the bat leave. If the bat does not fly away, or attempts to fly but fails, it may have an injury or illness. It may be a disoriented, dehydrated or starved from being trapped indoors. If this is the case, use the towel or gloves to gather the bat up. Keep the bat in the closed container and put it in a safe place that is free of children and pets, and contact NWRI. ***Note: It is not safe to attempt care for the bat on your own - bats should only be cared for by trained, vaccinated individuals. In order to survive, bats in may need specialized medical care, food and caging.***
- Call NWRI if you need assistance.

Although bats are extremely beneficial and help to maintain the balance of our delicate ecosystem, there are times when bats become a problem or a nuisance to home or business owners. Bat colonies living in human structures can be noisy and sometimes create unpleasant droppings or odors. They do not however,

cause structural damage nor do they chew on wires or wood. For more information on bats in buildings, please visit the Web sites of Bat World at www.batworld.org and Bat Conservation International at www.batcon.org. You may also contact NWRI for information.

Bats Found Outside

Tree-roosting bats in our area have beautiful fur in shades of reds

and orange or they have multi-colored fur that is frosted with white. These bats are frequently found on the ground in the early summer when mothers are moving their young, or when they become grounded following bird attacks or storms. Occasionally, these bats panic and defend themselves when humans approach by spreading their wings and making loud hissing or clicking noises. Follow the steps given to rescue a tree-roosting bat. If you feel unequipped to move the bat, please call NWRI immediately. If you find a bat on the ground outside, please do the following:

- Make sure the bat is safe from predators. Watch the bat so it does not fall prey to domestic pets or birds.
- If the bat remains quiet and still, gently touch a small tree branch (2 to 3 feet in length) to the bat's feet. Do not use your bare hands. This usually initiates a grab reflex and the bat will grip the branch with its toes. When you lift the branch you can inspect the bat(s) for any injuries. If the bat(s) are injured, contact NWRI. If the infants are clinging to the mother and there are no apparent injuries, proceed to the next step.
- Slowly and carefully move the bat(s) into the branches of a nearby tree. A sudden move may cause a mother bat to fly off and abandon her young. Using a ladder, gently secure the branch into a spot where foliage and leaves conceal the bats. The spot should be on a branch at least six or more feet from the ground, with a clearing below to enable the bat to take flight.
- Monitor the area, and check it the following morning. If the bat has remained in the same position overnight it may have an undetected injury or illness. If the mother bat is gone but her babies remain, the babies may have been abandoned. Contact NWRI for further assistance.

