

Wing Tips About *Bats*



Photo Dr. Merlin Tuttle

- Bats are flying mammals. The forelimbs of bats are webbed and developed as wings, making them the only mammals naturally capable of true and sustained flight. About 70 percent of bats **eat insects**. Most of the rest are fruit eaters. Bats are present throughout most of the world and perform vital ecological roles such as pollinating flowers and dispersing fruit seeds. Many tropical plants depend entirely on bats for the distribution of their seeds. Two local species listed here, Big and Little Brown Bats, commonly **use bat houses** as a roost site. Nightly they will consume an astonishing number of insects.



Photo Dr. Merlin Tuttle

- **Big Brown Bats** are insectivorous, eating many kinds of night-flying insects including mosquitoes, moths, beetles, and wasps which they capture in flight. This causes their sudden, frequent changes in direction. Big brown bats are nocturnal, roosting during the day in hollow trees, beneath loose tree bark, in the crevices of rocks or in manmade structures such as attics, barns, behind window shutters and in **bat houses**. Big brown bats navigate through the night skies by use of echolocation, producing ultrasonic sounds through the mouth or nose. Big brown bats are one of the few bats to produce audible sound during flight. Its voice is a click or a sound like escaping steam.



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- **Little Brown Bats** eat moths, wasps, beetles, gnats, mosquitoes, midges and mayflies. Since many of their preferred meals are insects with an aquatic life stage, they prefer to roost near water and will **use bat houses**. They echo-locate to find their prey. Often they will catch larger prey with a wingtip, transfer it to a cup formed by their tail, then eat it - smaller prey are usually just caught in the mouth. They often use the same routes over and over again every night, flying 3-6 meters high above water or among trees. An adult can sometimes fill its stomach in 15 minutes; young have more difficulty. If they do not catch any food, they will enter a torpor similar to hibernation, awakening at night to hunt again.