



AMAZING BAT FACTS

- There are more than **1,400 species of bats around the world**, 9 of which are found regularly in Pennsylvania (all are insect-eaters).
- Bats are **nocturnal** (active at night) and are the only **mammals capable of true, powered flight**.
- There are 2 major groups of bats:
 - **Insect-eating bats are nature's pest control.**
 - **Fruit bats pollinate and disperse the seeds of many plants.**
- Bats should be welcome guests in your garden. **A single bat can eat up to 3,000 in insects in a night, and up to 1 million insects per year!**
- Insect-eating bats **save USA farmers \$23 billion per year** in avoided crop damage and pesticide use!
- More than **300 plants and 400 economically important products** require fruit bats for pollination and/or seed dispersal, including bananas, peaches, and agaves, a.k.a. the tequila cactus!
- **Fruit bats disperse 95% of seeds in rain forests.** Without bats, disturbed forests cannot recover!



THREATS TO BATS

- Bats are among the world's most important, but misunderstood animals. **Unfortunately, many bat species are now threatened with extinction.**
- The primary threats to bats are:
 - **Hunting and persecution**
 - **Habitat destruction and climate change** cause bat mortality and loss of roosting & foraging sites. Habitat loss also brings bats in close contact with people and domestic animals, which can lead to spillover of zoonotic diseases from bats.
 - **White-nose syndrome** is a fungal disease that does not affect people but has killed millions of bats in North America.
 - **Wind energy** is an important source of renewable energy, but hundreds of thousands of bats are killed each year in the USA by collisions with wind turbine blades.



MYTH OR TRUTH?



MYTH: BATS ARE BLIND

TRUTH: All bats have eyes, and no bats are blind. Insect-eating bats use echolocation (sonar) to navigate and to find their prey, but they can still see very well. Fruit bats don't echolocate. They have excellent vision to find the fruit and flowers on which they feed.

MYTH: ALL BATS DRINK BLOOD

TRUTH: Only 3 species of vampire bats feed on blood, and they occur only in Central and South America. There are no vampire bats in the USA.

MYTH: BATS GET TANGLED IN HAIR

TRUTH: Bats are excellent navigators and fliers. Their echolocation is so accurate that they are unlikely even to touch you as they fly past, let alone get tangled in your hair.

MYTH: BATS WILL GIVE YOU RABIES

TRUTH: Bats are no more likely to carry and spread rabies than other mammals like dogs, cats, squirrels, raccoons, or rabbits. As with any wild animal, avoid touching or handling bats, as they may bite if they are frightened or feel threatened.

HOW TO HELP BATS

- **Be a friend to bats!** Spread the word about how important bats are!
- **Avoid herbicides & pesticides, and promote native habitat in your garden**
 - Pesticides kill beneficial insects as well as pests, and they can poison bats.
 - **Instead, attract bats to your garden as natural pest control!**
 - For info on Gardening for Bats, see: www.batcon.org/about-bats/bat-houses/
- **Turn off lights:** light pollution can deter bats and disrupt their hunting.
- **Don't disturb bats**



▪ Stay out of caves and mines where bats hibernate in winter. Entering these sites disturbs the bats and can increase spread of white-nose syndrome.

- **Keep cats indoors at night in summer when bats are feeding young**



▪ Cat attacks are one of the most common causes of bat (and bird) casualties. At the minimum, keep your cat indoors from a ½ hour before sunset to a ½ hour after sunset when bats are most active.

- **Remove unwanted bats humanely and avoid using poisons**
 - Poisons are extremely harmful to people, to pets, and to bats.
 - Poison is not a permanent solution: as soon as it wears off, the bats will return.
 - **Many bat species are federally protected – there may be penalties for mishandling or killing protected species!**
 - If bats are roosting in your home, **exclusion is the cheapest, safest, and most permanent solution** to a bat problem.
 - **For detailed instructions on how to catch and release a single bat safely, how to exclude a bat colony humanely, and how to prevent bats from entering buildings, see:** www.batcon.org/about-bats/bats-in-homes-buildings/
- **Install a bat house**
 - You can buy or build your own bat house (see installation tips at right)
 - Bat Conservation International has **FREE downloadable designs for bat houses:** www.batcon.org/about-bats/bat-houses/
 - If you purchase a bat house, to be most effective, it should:
 - be at least 24" high x 16" wide
 - not contain fabric or mesh
 - have roosting boards and landing pads made of roughened wood



BAT HOUSE INSTALLATION TIPS



Photo credit: Greg Turner, PA Game Commission

- Bats generally prefer roosts that are **mounted on buildings** rather than on poles or trees.
- Pole mounts can work well in moderate to hot climates that don't experience extreme day-night temperature changes.
- **Avoid mounting on a tree** - these sites are vulnerable to predators and are too shaded.
- Bat houses need to **receive at least 6 hours of sun** per day.
- Bat houses should be sited **close to a water source** (less than ¼ mile away).
- The bottom of the bat house should be **at least 10-12 feet off the ground.**
- The bat house should be mounted 20-40 feet from nearest trees.
- Bat houses in Pennsylvania should be **stained dark brown or black** to maximize heat absorption and retention. Use only non-toxic, water-based stains.