

# Bats



Photo: Eric Sambol

Understanding the habits and habitats of wildlife, and taking appropriate measures to prevent unwanted encounters, will help everyone to continue to enjoy the wonderful wild resources that still exist in New Jersey.

## Getting to Know Bats

The most common type of bat in this area is the big brown bat (*Eptesicus fuscus*). There are 40 species of bats in the United States, each with distinctive physical characteristics. New Jersey is lucky enough to have nine species inhabiting the state. Bats are the only mammals capable of actual flight. Bats are nocturnal. They hunt at night and roost during the day in trees, bat boxes, under eaves, and in buildings where they can gain access through open spaces in the roof, attic, or walls.

Bats in our area are insectivores and live around fresh water where they can find insects. Bats are most active in the spring and summer, and many migrate or hibernate during the winter. Bats are not blind. Although they have fairly good eyesight, they navigate and find food primarily by using a sonar system known as echolocation.

Most bats give birth to a single pup, which is unable to fly for several months. Young cling to their mothers until they are too large to be carried and then are left behind in a nursery colony while the adults hunt. Accessible attic spaces, which are warm and dark, are sometimes used as nursery sites until the young are old enough to fly on their own. For centuries, bats have been the victims of negative mythology, but in reality they are useful predators and help to control insects. A single brown

bat can consume up to 3,000 mosquitoes every night. Bats cannot fly up from the ground. They use walls or tree limbs to help them lift off.

Healthy bats prefer to keep their distance from humans. However, there are rare instances of rabid bats biting humans and other animals. If you find a sick or injured bat, contact your local wildlife rehabilitation center for assistance. Never attempt to pick up a bat with your bare hands. Bats sometimes find their way into buildings, not by chewing or digging their way in but by squeezing through cracks and holes as small as a dime. Damage caused by bats is usually minimal, but the smell of their droppings can be offensive.

If you discover a bat in your living space, remain calm and provide a way for the animal to leave the house. Close interior doors, turn out the lights, open a door or window, and wait for the bat to locate the exit. If the bat is found during the day, you might have to wait until nightfall before the bat leaves. Once the bat is gone, determine how it entered, checking for possible entry points around door and window casings, air conditioners, vents, and chimneys. If you are sure there are no other bats in the house, seal all holes and cracks.

If you suspect that a colony of bats has taken up residence in a wall or attic space, watch for bat activity at night and look for signs of accumulated droppings below the entry. The best strategy for bat-proofing is:

Bats have been plagued by centuries of superstitions, but they are actually one of nature's more gentle creatures.

## About Mercer County Wildlife Center

The Mercer County Wildlife Center is a state and federally licensed facility that cares for injured, ill and displaced wildlife. The Center provides these animals with the medical treatment and a temporary refuge before releasing them back into an appropriate wild habitat.

For more information regarding the work we do and the animals who share our environment, including a series of printable brochures that provide tips for coexisting peacefully with those animals, visit us online at:  
[www.mercercounty.org/departments/mercer-county-park-commission/wildlife-center](http://www.mercercounty.org/departments/mercer-county-park-commission/wildlife-center)

For information on protecting bee hives and livestock, contact the Division of Fish and Wildlife Wildlife Control Unit at (908) 735-8793.



- Allow the bats to leave on their own
- Do not use repellents because they will drive the animals further into the house.
- From May until late August, assume there are juveniles in the space, and wait until the young are old enough to fly out with the adults.
- Make certain there are no remaining bats in the space. Then, begin excluding the bats by closing off all available entries. Leave one hole open and fit it with a one-way door, similar to a cat door, with a hinged flap so that bats can escape but not reenter. Leave this in place for several days, continue to watch for bat activity, and, if possible, inspect the space until you are certain that they are gone.
- Permanently exclude bats by sealing all possible entries. Caulk cracks during warm, dry weather when the cracks are the widest. Use weather stripping to seal spaces around doors, windows, and vents, and replace loose boards.

### A SINGLE BROWN BAT

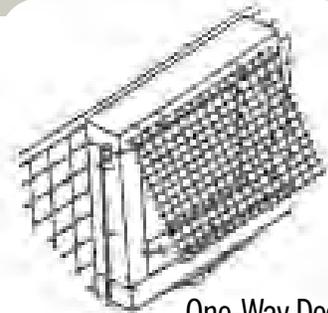
Weights 10 to 14 grams

Consumes 4 to 8 grams of insects each night

Between 1600 and 3000 mosquitoes

Although this may not sound like much...  
it adds up

The loss of the one million bats in the northeast has probably resulted in between 660 and 1230 metric tons of insects no longer being eaten each year by bats in the region.



One-Way Door



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Dan Benson, County Executive

The Mercer County Wildlife Center is owned by Mercer County and operated by the Mercer County Park Commission with the support and assistance of Wildlife Center Friends. Wildlife Center Friends is a 501(C)(3) non-profit organization formed to support the activities of the Mercer County Wildlife Center. • [www.wildlifecenterfriends.org](http://www.wildlifecenterfriends.org)