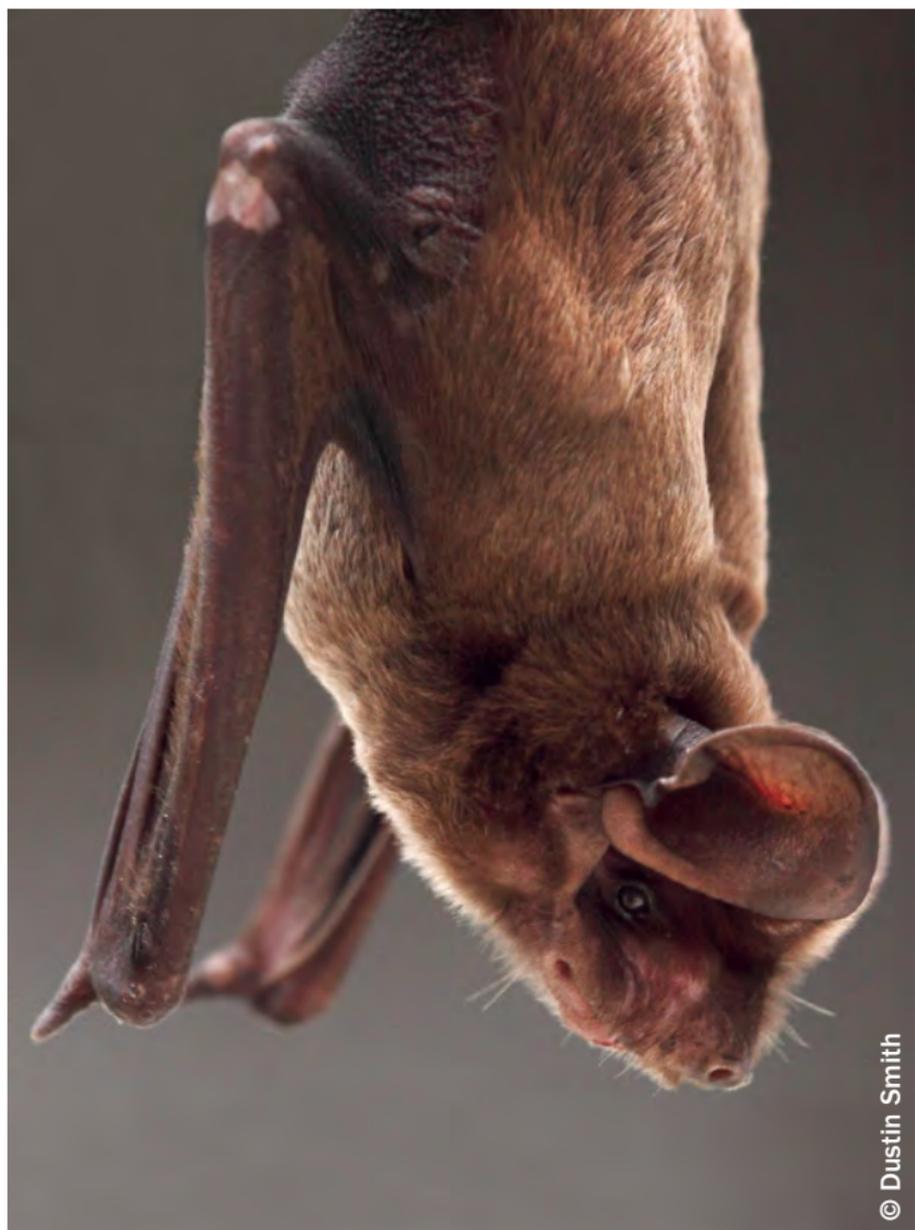


A guide to living with **Bats**



© Dustin Smith

Florida bonneted bat



Florida Fish and Wildlife
Conservation Commission

MyFWC.com

UF | UNIVERSITY of
FLORIDA

IFAS Extension



© Chris Burney

A hoary bat, one of Florida's bat species that roosts in trees.

Living with bats

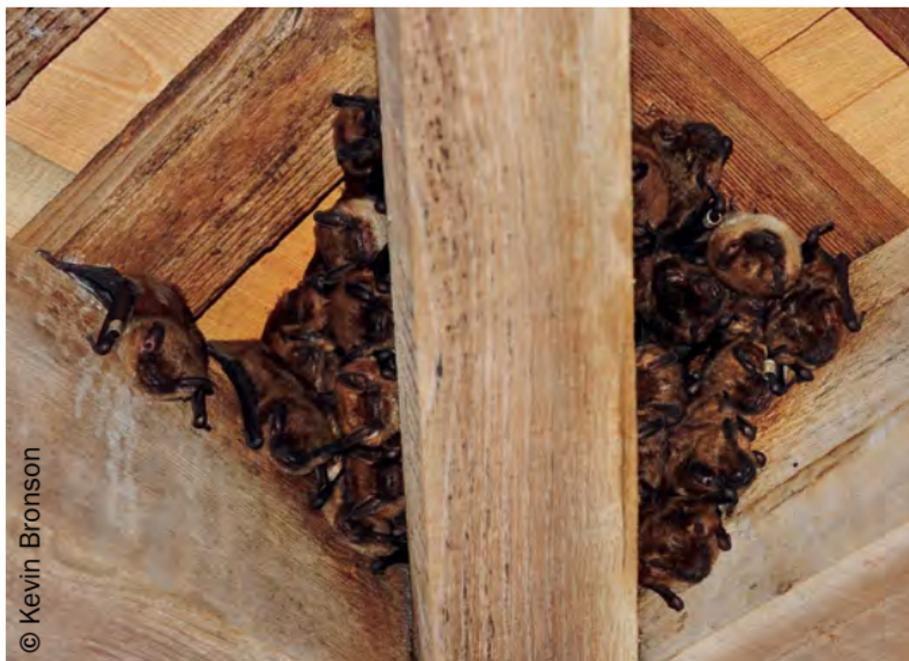
Bats are the only mammals that can truly fly. By grooming themselves regularly they keep their fur very clean. In Florida, there are 13 resident bat species. All of these bats feed on night-flying insects. They rely on echolocation, using high-frequency sound waves to navigate and find prey even in total darkness.

Many Florida bat species roost in colonies ranging from a few bats to many thousands, but some roost individually. Some important natural roost sites for Florida's bats are trees with cavities or peeling bark, palm trees, Spanish moss, and caves.

Bats provide major ecological and economic benefits. One bat can consume hundreds of insects a night. Bats save U.S. farmers billions of dollars annually by controlling insects that damage crops and spread disease among livestock.

Bats in buildings

Bats may roost in buildings or other man-made structures that mimic their natural habitats. This may occur after their habitat is disturbed and can create conflicts between bats and humans.



A big brown bat colony in a picnic pavilion.

Bats roosting in buildings do not physically damage structures, but can cause stains or odors.

If you suspect bats are living in a building, check for staining and bat feces, known as guano. Bat stains are light brown discolorations consisting of oils and dirt left around openings the bats use to enter the roost. Guano is black, dry, and found under the roost site and by the openings. Also, look for bats at dawn or dusk as they enter or leave the roost. **Bat exclusion devices should be used to humanely remove bats that are roosting in a building. These should only be used from August 16 through April 14, outside of the maternity season.**

How to remove bats from buildings

Exclusion devices allow bats to exit but not reenter a roost. It is vital that exclusions are done properly to prevent illegal killing of bats. Detailed information on how to exclude bats from buildings in Florida is available at: MyFWC.com/bats.



A Rafinesque's big-eared bat.

One bat in a building

There is an exception to the bat exclusion rule: A single bat found inside the living space of a building can be removed at any time of year. If you find a bat indoors, stay calm. The bat may fly around as it attempts to escape but is not trying to attack. Turn on lights so you can see the bat. Confine the bat to a single room and open windows and doors to let it escape. If the bat cannot find its way out, wait for it to land and then carefully capture the bat by either placing a container over the animal and sliding a piece of thick paper underneath or using a thick towel and leather gloves to contain the bat before releasing it outdoors.

This information has been produced by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) and the University of Florida, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (UF/IFAS) for the people of the state of Florida. FWC and UF/IFAS permit free reproduction by all agents and offices of the Cooperative Extension Service, the FWC, and the people of Florida. Permission is granted to others to use these materials in part or full for educational purposes, provided that full credit is given to the FWC and UF/IFAS.



A Seminole bat.

Bat maternity season

In Florida, the maternity season lasts from April 15 through August 15. This is when bats breed and young are born. During this time, people in Florida are not allowed to disturb bats or attempt to remove them from buildings.

Newborn bats are known as pups, which are flightless and completely dependent on their mother's milk. Female bats require roosts free from disturbance, with constant high temperatures to help keep the pups warm. For this reason, a maternity colony in a building usually is not found within rooms where people live or work.



A big brown bat.



Big brown bat chasing insects at night.

Helping bats survive

Bats are fascinating animals that fly using wings supported by many of the same types of bones that we have in our arms and hands. They can be good neighbors and our best friends on a summer night. Did you know that a single bat can eat hundreds of mosquitoes each night? By helping bats, you can be helping yourself.

But, Florida's bats are facing a lot of challenges. They're misunderstood. They're losing their natural roost sites as forests are removed and caves are blocked. Now a new disease called white-nose syndrome (WNS) has killed millions of cave-roosting bats and is spreading rapidly. As of early 2015, WNS has not reached Florida, but it remains a serious threat.

These are ways you can help bats thrive in Florida:

- Spread the word that bats help people by eating large amounts of mosquitoes and agricultural pests.
- Preserve natural roost sites such as trees with cavities and peeling bark, and dead fronds on palms.
- Put up a bat house.
- Report unusual bat behavior to:
MyFWC.com/BatMortality.
- Do not enter Florida caves with shoes, clothing or equipment that has been used in caves outside of Florida.

Common bat myths

There is a rabies epidemic in bats. Myth!

The incidence of rabies in bats is rare. Bites can be avoided by not touching bats.

Bats regularly attack people. Myth!

Bats are shy and will try to avoid people but they are excellent fliers and you may see them trying to catch insects.

All bats are blind. Myth!

Bats use echolocation to locate prey, but all bats have eyes and they can see very well. Bats sometimes see better than people when there is little light.

Bats are attracted to human hair. Myth!

Bats don't aim for a person's hair. Bats are agile fliers whose echolocation skills help them maneuver in complete darkness.

All bats suck blood. Myth!

Florida's resident bats only eat insects. Only vampire bats consume blood, and they are found ONLY in Central and South America, feeding mainly on livestock and wildlife.



Bat houses installed on poles.

Remember:

- Bats are important parts of healthy ecosystems.
- Wait for the end of the maternity season before taking any actions to exclude bats from buildings.
- The intentional harming of bats is prohibited.
- Bats cannot legally be trapped and relocated.
- Protect bats by preserving roosting habitat and preventing the spread of WNS.
- Do NOT handle bats, especially sick, injured or dead bats.

Find out more about Florida's bats, including how to exclude bats from buildings and how to build and install bat houses at: MyFWC.com/bats and EDIS.IFAS.UFL.edu/topic_bats.

If you have additional questions about bats or are experiencing bat conflicts, please contact your nearest FWC regional office:

FWC Regional Offices:

North Central	Lake City	386-758-0525
Northeast	Ocala	352-732-1225
Northwest	Panama City	850-265-3676
South	West Palm Beach	561-625-5122
Southwest	Lakeland	863-648-3200



Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

620 South Meridian Street
Tallahassee, Florida 32399-1600
www.MyFWC.com/Manatee

Follow us on:

