



Little Brown Bat

The natural bug zapper

As evening descends on the Willamette wet prairie, a tiny, furry mammal flies just above the land, snatching up insects. The wet prairie provides critical feeding grounds and roosting areas for bats. They prey on flying insects such as midges, mayflies and mosquitoes. Return some evening and watch the acrobatics of these amazing flyers. Bats are most commonly found around areas that attract insects, such as lights or water.



In addition to catching insects directly in their mouth, bats use their wings and tail membrane to deflect or capture the insects. When you see a bat make what seems to be a somersault in flight, it has netted a bug in its wings, transferred it to its tail membrane and bent over to take the bug in its mouth.



The little brown bat (*Myotis lucifugus*) is the farmer's friend. It helps reduce agricultural crop damage from insects. On average, a bat eats about half its body weight in insects each night. That's about five hundred mosquitoes an hour.

Imagine how hard it would be to find flying insects in the dark. Bats locate insects while they are swooping around the dark sky by using echolocation. They send out ultra high-pitched sounds that bounce off of solid objects, revealing the location of the object.



Little brown bats hibernate from October through February, when there are fewer flying insects. They roost in nearby trees or buildings, but they do not remain asleep for the whole winter. They wake up from time to time to urinate and drink water. Uninterrupted sleep averages between 12-19 days, but may last as long as 83 days.

"If we visited the wetlands at night, would we see any animals?" Steve asks.

"We might see a little brown bat. They come out at night and eat insects," Esther says.

But which insects do they eat? Help them decide which of these insects would be eaten by a little brown bat.



Do you see any insects in the wetlands that bats would eat?

Answer: Little brown bats eat only flying insects