

## BAT RESPECT

With all the vampire stories out there, it's not surprising that bats seem a little scary. But there's no need to be afraid of these creatures of night. Bats are really cool animals and they play an important role in nature. Here are just a few reasons to love bats.

### Ultimate Bug Fighters

Are you a mosquito magnet? Bats to the rescue! All nine species of bats found in Massachusetts are insectivores, meaning they eat insects. In fact, one bat can eat up to 500 mosquitoes (and similarly sized insects) in one hour. And since bats can live in colonies of hundreds, thousands, or even millions of bats, that's a lot of insects.

### Do the math

Colony of 100 bats =  insects in one hour

Colony of 300 bats =  insects in one hour

Colony of 10,000 bats =  insects in one hour

### Wings Up

Bats are the only mammals that can fly (flying squirrels, despite their name, can only glide). Their wings are between 8.5 and 13 inches wide and have four long fingers and a short "thumb" with super thin skin (think: piece-of-paper thin) stretched between them.

### Fuzzy, Wuzzy Was a Bat

Bats have fur and are homoeothermic (pronounced home-ee-o-THERM-ick), meaning they are warm-blooded and make their own body heat to keep themselves warmer than their surroundings. They can also save energy by allowing their bodies to cool while they roost (or rest) during the day.

### Big Ears, Big Sounds

Some bats have ears twice as big as their heads. Imagine how well you could hear if your ears were bigger. Give it a try: First listen to music, the TV, or a person talking. Then, cup your hands around the back of your ears and listen to the same sound. What do you notice?

### Echo...echo...echo...

Bats don't use their eyes to hunt or get around. Instead, they use their ears. They send out high-pitched sounds that bounce off their prey or another object and return to the bat as a vibration. The stronger the vibration, the closer the prey is. This is called echolocation.

### Be a Bat Hero

Next time you see a spooky bat Halloween decoration, share some of the reasons why bats are so cool. If we can respect bats and keep their habitats clean and safe, they will continue to help the nature of Massachusetts.

