

2

BAT ATTITUDES

Objective: *To correct common myths about bats*

Grades: *K-2*

Type of Activity: *Simple quiz and coloring*

Materials:

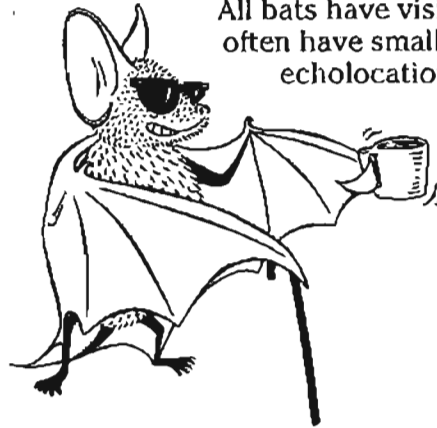
- *Copies of pages 11 and 12*
- *Crayons or markers*
- *Scissors*
- *Lamination material (optional)*

Background Information

Throughout history, bats have been shrouded in myth and superstition. Bats are shy, fly at night, and are difficult to observe. Hollywood has played a major role in perpetuating misinformation about these fascinating and highly beneficial animals.

On page 11 are six cartoons illustrating something that is true or false about bats. Make double-sided copies of pages 11 and 12 for each student. (Note that text on page 12 should line up with the appropriate cartoon.) Before looking at the answers on the reverse side, ask students to respond, true or false, to the statement on each cartoon. The individual cartoons can be colored and cut apart. Cartoons could later be laminated and used as a game for review. Children can also use the cards to quiz other students. The following provides additional information on each statement for educators to use when presenting the activity.

1. Bats Are Blind. **False.**



All bats have vision and see well. Insectivorous bats often have small eyes and depend primarily on their echolocation (sonar) to navigate and find food.

Fruit bats, especially flying foxes, have excellent vision and a good sense of smell, which they use to find ripe fruit. Flying fox bats, who have large eyes, are not able to echolocate. Sonar is not needed to find stationary food.

2. Bats Get Caught in Your Hair. **False.**

Insects often hover around people, and a hungry bat may seem to swoop down in hot pursuit of a pesky mosquito. Their sonar ability is sophisticated enough to find such an insect in complete darkness. They certainly are not going to blunder into a person's hair.



3. Bats Are Flying Mice. **False.**



While bats may resemble mice with wings, they are not closely related to rodents. Both bats and mice are mammals, but studies indicate bats to be more closely related to primates (and humans) than to rodents. Flying foxes have a brain organization very similar to ours.

4. Bats Are Dirty and Many Carry Rabies. **False.**

Bats are very clean and groom themselves several times a day just like cats. The issue of bats and rabies is greatly exaggerated. Bats can contract rabies just like all mammals, but they are not asymptomatic carriers of rabies, and they quickly die from the disease. The

incidence of rabies in bats is less than half of one percent. In more than 40 years of record-keeping in the U.S., only 20 people are believed to have died from contact with bats. As many or more people die *annually* from being attacked by their own pet dogs. People have little to fear from bats if they never try to handle them. An important message for children, especially when they come to like bats, is that bats are wild animals that should never be touched. Any bat or wild animal that can be approached is more likely than others to be sick.



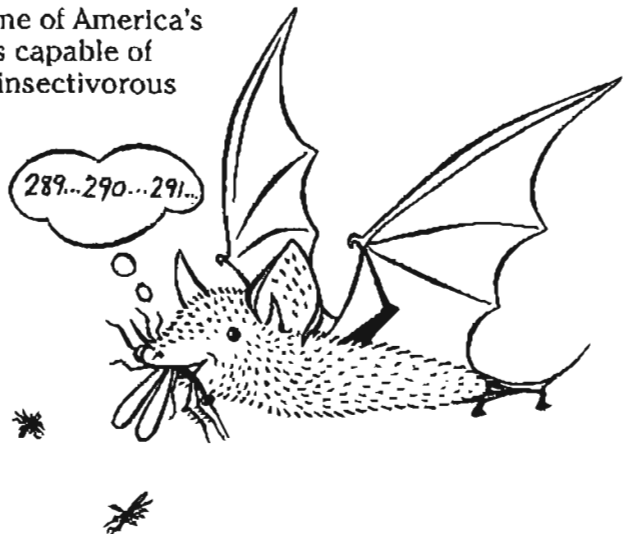
5. Bats Are the Only Mammals That Can Truly Fly.
True.



Mammals such as flying squirrels are actually gliders. Bats are the only mammals capable of sustained flight. There is a great diversity of flight patterns among the nearly 1,000 kinds of bats. Some can hover like hummingbirds while feeding on nectar, and a few diurnal flying foxes are able to soar on thermals just like eagles.

6. Some Bats Can Catch up to 600 Mosquitoes in Just One Hour.
True.

The little brown bat, one of America's most common species, is capable of such a feat. On average, insectivorous bats eat about half their weight in insects each night. Nursing mothers sometimes eat more than their body weight. A Texas nursery colony of 20 million Mexican free-tailed bats can consume up to 500,000 pounds of insects in a single night. 🦇

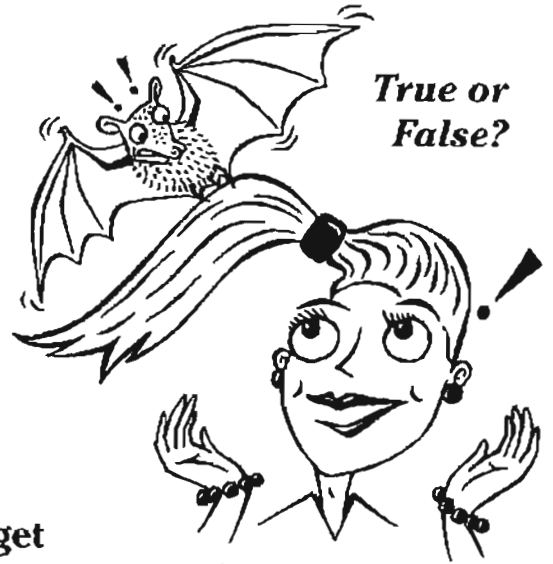


True or False?



Bats are blind.

True or False?



Bats get caught in your hair.

True or False?



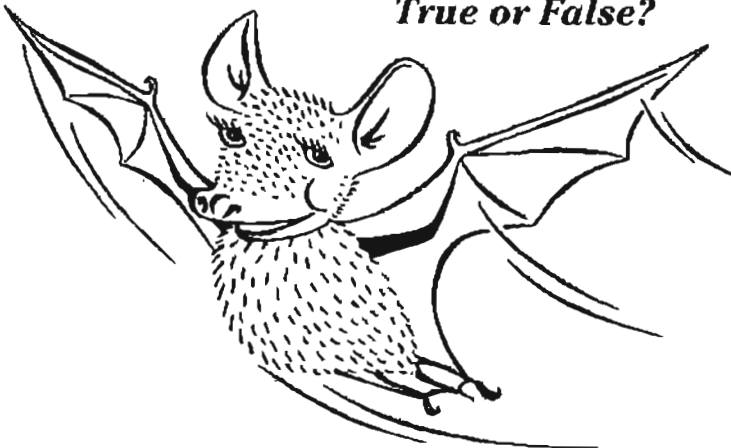
Bats are flying mice.

True or False?



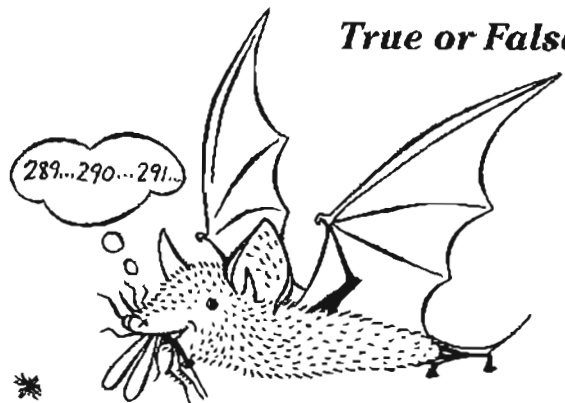
Bats are dirty and many carry rabies.

True or False?



Bats are the only mammals that truly fly.

True or False?



Some bats can catch up to 600 mosquitoes in one hour.

FALSE

Bats can find tiny insects in total darkness. They are much too smart to fly into people.

FALSE

No bats are blind and many can see very well. Insect-eating bats depend on sound and very good hearing to find food and get around in the dark.

FALSE

Bats are clean and groom themselves just like cats.

Bats can get rabies, like all mammals, but few do. Remember, bats are wild animals. You have nothing to fear if you never touch a bat.

FALSE

While both bats and mice are mammals, bats are not rodents and are more closely related to primates and people.

TRUE

Insect-eating bats can eat up to half their body weight in insects in one night. The record for mosquito catching is 600 in an hour!

TRUE

Some mammals, like flying squirrels, can glide. Bats are the only mammals that can really fly.