

Big Brown Bat
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Bat Conservation International

Common Bats of the Bahamas

About Bats

- Bats are mammals. Their bodies are covered with fur and mother bats feed their pups milk.
- Even though the name “rat bat” is commonly used in the Bahamas, bats are not related to rats or mice.
- The Bahamian Funnel-eared Bat (*Chilonatalus tumidifrons*) occurs only on the Bahamas.
- Scientists consider the Bahamian Funnel-eared Bat as *threatened* because their populations are declining throughout the Bahamas.
- Bats that eat insects can serve as natural pest control and help reduce the amount of pesticides used to treat plants.
- Bats and Ingraham’s Hutia are the only native land mammals still extant on the Bahamas.

The Importance of Caves

- Most species of bat in the Bahamas use caves as maternity roosts.
- The stable environment of caves throughout the Bahamas provides roosting sites for bats and offers protection from natural disturbance, such as hurricanes.
- Bahamian caves are great centers of biodiversity. In addition to bats, they provide shelter to shrimp, copepods, annelids, amphipods, isopods, insects, and fish, some of which occur only in the Bahamas.
- Conservation and protection of caves in the Bahamas can help preserve biodiversity, minimize the disturbance on bats, and can help maintain healthy bat populations.

The Bahamian Funnel-eared Bat



Chilonatalus tumidifrons (Natalidae)
The Bahamian funnel-eared bat is the second smallest bat in the Bahamas. It is strictly a cave dwelling species where it can be found in small groups from 10 to about 500 individuals. This bat occurs only on Abaco, Andros, and San Salvador. Because of its narrow distribution and small sized colonies, Bahamian funnel-eared bats can be very susceptible to disturbance. This bat is a strict insectivore but its life history is poorly known. As the only “true Bahamian” bat, we encourage everyone to make a special effort toward the conservation of this species .

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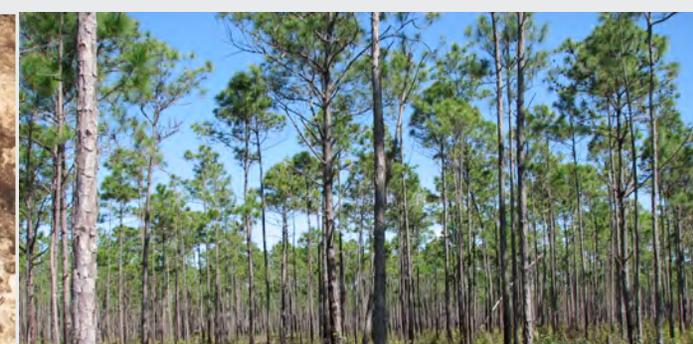
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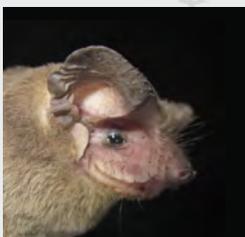
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Mexican Free-tailed Bat

Tadarida brasiliensis (Molossidae)

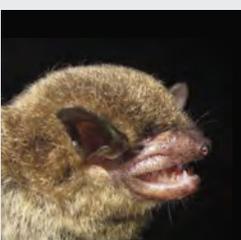
Mexican free-tailed bats are small and can roost in tight groups of a dozen to a few hundred individuals. They are commonly found in abandoned buildings where they can find small holes or crevices. They are also found in caves and occasionally in houses. This species can fly very fast and can be seen flying high above the trees searching for moths and other insects. Their hair is evenly colored chocolate brown to dark gray-brown. Free-tailed bats can be easily identified by their long "free tail" that extends between their legs.



Big Brown Bat

Eptesicus fuscus (Vespertilionidae)

Big brown bats almost exclusively roost in caves forming groups of a few hundred bats. Occasionally, a single big brown bat can be seen

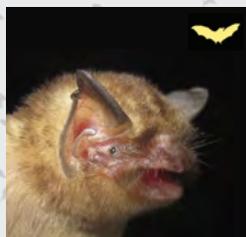


roosting on its own. Their hair is dark brown at the base with light brown tips. They are easily identified by the dark brown-to-black colored wings. This bat can feed on many kinds of insects but often prefers beetles, which it can crush with its strong teeth. Sometimes big brown bats can be seen hunting insects around street lights.

Gervais' Funnel-eared Bat

Nyctiellus lepidus (Natalidae)

Gervais' funnel-eared bats are one of the smallest mammals in the world and weigh about as much as one Bahamian cent coin. These bats only



roost in caves where humidity is high. Groups of up to 15 individuals usually roost in deep and narrow bell holes of caves. Larger groups of a few thousand individuals can be found in some caves. Gervais' funnel-eared bats eat insects and often capture small flies, mosquitoes, and leaf-hoppers. They can be seen hunting for insects mostly around sunset and sunrise when many small insects are active.

Buffy Flower Bat

Erophylla sezekorni (Phyllostomidae)

Buffy flower bats are medium sized and easily identified by their light brown or tan coloration of the hair. This bat

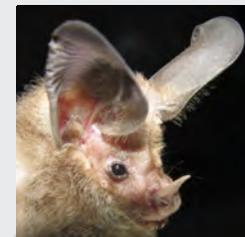


visits flowers and can help pollinate native plants as well as crop plants, such as banana, in the Bahamas. It also eats hard insects, such as beetles. They can roost in caves or in abandoned buildings where they spread out in large groups. Buffy flower bats have a long tongue that is covered with small hair-like papillae, which they use to lap the nectar from the flowers they visit.

Waterhouse's Leaf-nosed Bat

Macrotus waterhousii (Phyllostomidae)

Waterhouse's leaf-nosed bats are one of the most common species of bat in the Bahamas. They are medium sized and



their hair is gray to brown in color. This bat is easily identified by its charismatic long ears and noticeable nose leaf (a fleshy protrusion at the tip of the snout). Leaf-nosed bats roost in caves forming small groups of a few bats up to about 100. These bats have a very quiet and maneuverable flight especially useful for gleaning large insects from the ground or plants. In the Bahamas, they feed on cockroaches, crickets, katydids, and large moths, among other insects.

Bats of the Bahamas

The Bahamas is home to a total of 11 species of bat. Their diet is very diverse and include insects, fruit, nectar, and small fish (as it is the case for the Greater bulldog bat - *Noctilio leporinus*). The limestone rock of the Bahamas promotes the formation of caves, which are primarily used as shelter by many of the local bats. Also, the large stands of pine and coppice vegetation provide suitable habitat where bats can find food and protection from aerial predators, such as owls and hawks.



= Found only on the Caribbean Islands