



How to go Bat Watching

- Arizona's smallest bat, the western pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus hesperus*) is often the most viewed bat since it emerges right around sunset time. It has a very short wing span (~5") and flies very erratically. It feeds on a variety of small mosquito-sized insects and stays close to vegetation and water. This bat is very common in the Phoenix/Tucson metropolitan areas
- If you are near a large body of water, or out on a lake fishing you may view bats circling the water surface foraging for insects. One bat that is strongly associated with this behavior is the Yuma Myotis (*Myotis yumanensis*) or Yuma bat. In the winter months you can watch this bat emerging from The London Bridge on Lake Havasu.
- Many large older bridges serve as summer roosts for several species of bats. The most common species in Arizona to use bridges is the Mexican free-tailed bat (*Tadarida brasiliensis*). This bat is truly a farmer's friend since it preys on the moth that lays destructive larvae on cotton and corn crops. This bat can travel long distances in a night (up to 50 miles) and with a good tail wind, it can travel about 60 mph. If you are in Phoenix during the summer, visit the flood control tunnel near 40th Street and Camelback to view the nightly exodus. Another great bat bridge is in Tucson where the Broadway Bridge crosses the Pantano Wash. Thousands of bats exit nightly at both sites during the summer months.
- Large outdoor lights attract a variety of moth-eating bats, so tour your local park, stadium or car lot on those warm summer nights to watch the bats nabbing moths. Some moths have ears and can actually hear the bat's echolocation calls. Be careful not to stare into the light, view the area just outside the halo of light to view the hunting strategy of the bats. If you are in the mid elevations of Arizona, the bat most frequently viewed in meadows, tree-lined streets and around lights is the big-brown bat (*Eptesicus fuscus*). This bat is closely associated with human structures; in attics, barns, sheds, stables, and homes.
- Campground buildings are also great spots to watch bat activity. Restrooms and other well-lit areas attract insects that are often preyed upon by bats. If there are a lot of moths, try this experiment...jingle a large set of keys near the swarming moths. If some of the moths drop suddenly, they are eared moths and sounds created by the keys (ultrasonic clicks) were interpreted as calls from a bat. This avoidance technique is just one of many life saving adaptations. Don't worry, the disabling effect is only temporary, the moth will be able to fly again in just a short time.
- Visiting the southeastern areas of the state mid summer to fall, you may be able to watch nectar feeding bats filling up at hummingbird feeders. Several bed and breakfasts near Portal, Sierra Vista, and Ramsey Canyon tout regular visits by the lesser long-nosed and Mexican long-tongued bats (*Leptonycteris curasoae* and *Choeronycteris Mexicana* respectively). While you are visiting these areas, you may also see several migratory hummingbirds.

Note: Bats are nocturnal, so to observe wild bats you will need to stay out after sunset!!