

St. Marks NWR is home to 9 additional species of bats:

1. Southeastern Bat
2. Seminole Bat
3. Eastern Pipistrelle
4. Hoary Bat
5. Big Brown Bat
6. Yellow Bat
7. Red Bat
8. Evening Bat
9. Rafinesque's Big-Eared Bat

Important things to remember when observing bats:

- ◇ Bats are designated by Florida Statutes Chapter 372 as “Non-Game Wildlife” and their habitat must not be molested or disturbed by humans.
- ◇ do not throw any objects at bats or bat houses or bat barns
- ◇ Avoid making loud or high-pitched noises, as bats are easily disturbed
- ◇ Maintain a safe distance
- ◇ Beware of falling urine and guano as bats fly overhead
- ◇ Never pick up a bat on the ground.



Bats emerge at dusk

—Scott Mitchell

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Collecting or taking any plants, animals, or artifacts from federal lands is prohibited.



Facts About Brazilian Free-tailed Bats

St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge *Where Wildlife Comes First!*

A couple of years ago, we discovered that bats were trying to roost under the Visitors Center's roof. So we built a bat condo on the side of the building. The bats moved in right away and were happy. We were happy. Unfortunately, bats produce guano which was adding to the nutrient load in Plum Orchard Pond. Recently refuge staff moved the nest to across the street from the Visitor Brazilian Free-tailed bats are also called the Mexican Free-tailed bat and the guano bat. You might recognize this bat from that is on a famous rum bottle.



Their name comes from the mouse like tail, which protrudes freely beyond the flight membrane that stretches between its hind quarters. The tail makes up almost half their length.

Brazilian Free-tailed bats occupy a wide variety of habitats, such as limestone caves, abandoned mines, under bridges, and in buildings and smaller colonies have been found in hollow trees. A colony can have numbers from 50 into the millions. The largest populations are found throughout Texas and Mexico forming colonies in the millions. Because of their musty odor it is sometimes possible to smell a colony downwind from a half a block away. The bats will forage as far as 25-30 miles from their home at night and then return each morning before dawn.

Bats are the only mammal that truly flies, rather than just glide like a few other mammals (i.e. flying squirrel). They also navigate using echolocation, (the location of objects using reflected sound). Sounds are sent out into the environment to bounce off of nearby objects and return information by measuring the amount of time it takes for the sound wave to return.

Most small mammals have short life spans. But bats, for their size, have the longest life span of any mammal. The life span of a Brazilian Free-tailed is 8 years.

Our new Bat Commune

In October 2018, Hurricane Michael removed one of the bat houses from the side of the Visitors Center and deposited it in Plum Orchard Pond.

It took us awhile, but we were finally able to retrieve the house and clean it up. In February 2019, a new bat housing area was created across the street from the Visitors Center.

It meant that the one remaining house had to be removed from the building and quickly put up on the new poles. This was a scary moment, for we did not know what to expect. Only two bats fell out during the move and the others stayed put for the entire process.



Selena Kiser gently places the two bats that fell out of the large house into a smaller house.

How you can help bats

Plant a Bat Garden

Bats eat night flying insects. Bats eat many garden and agricultural pests, including cut worm moths, chafer beetles, potato beetles and spotted cucumber beetles.

Almost a third of the world's bats feed on fruit or nectar of plants. In return for their meals, these bats are vital pollinators of countless plants (many of great economic value) and essential seed dispersers with a major role in regenerating rainforests.

If you would like to attract bats to your garden, you will need to plant flowers that will attract night pollinators, like moths, which bats like to eat. Plant flowers that bloom late in the day or are night-scented.

Native plant suggestions:

Evening primrose

Phlox

Night flowering Silene (catchfly)

Fleabane

Goldenrod

For more information on Florida's bats go to:
<https://www.nps.gov/ever/learn/nature/brazilianfreetailedbat.htm>