



BATS

ARE MAMMALS



There are 13 species of bats that live in Florida. All of the bat species that live in Florida are insectivores, meaning they eat a lot of moths, flies, wasps, ants, mosquitoes and more. They can eat their body weight in bugs every night!

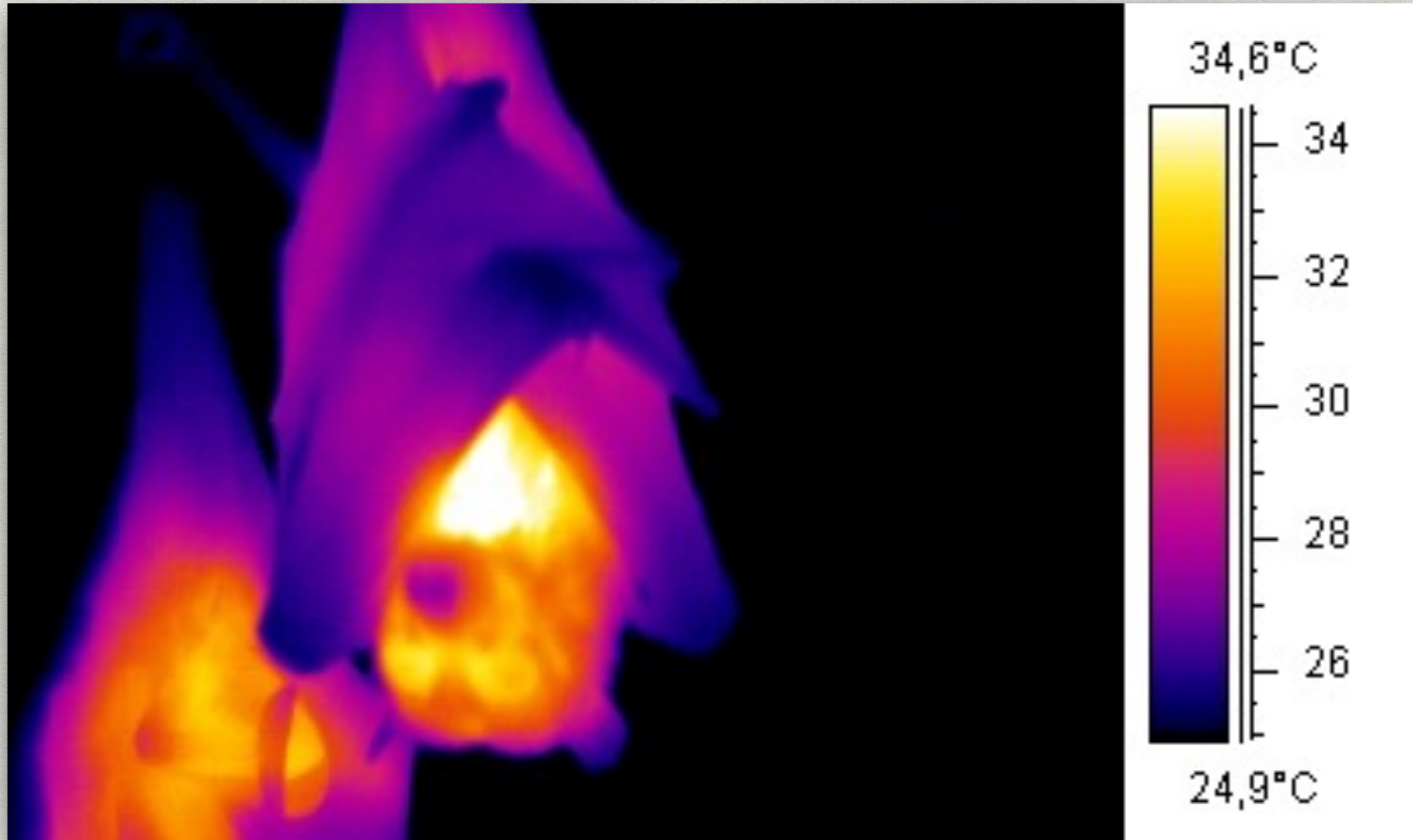
- * Estimated population: 450,000-500,000 bats
- * Capacity of bat house and bat barn: 750,000 bats
- * Nightly insect consumption: 2.5 billion insects (more than 2,500 pounds)
- * Types of insects consumed: Moths, beetles, mosquitoes, flies, gnats, leafhoppers, midges, winged ants and many other pests.

Bats are the primary predator of night-flying insects in the world. Their contribution to natural, biological pest control is tremendous. At least eight species in the western U.S. are pollinators, but bats play a much larger role in pollination and seed dispersal for many fruit trees in other countries. Bat manure, or guano, is a superior organic fertilizer containing many valuable micronutrients and naturally occurring soil microbes that aid in plant nutrition.

The bats normally emerge during a 15 to 20 minute period after sunset, before total darkness on calm, warm evenings when temperatures are above 65 F.

Bats may swoop near those observing the emergence to eat insects attracted to the carbon dioxide in human breath, however they will not attack or harm people when left alone. High winds, heavy rain or cold temperatures will keep the bats in the house for the evening. On warm winter evenings, the bats may come out for a drink of water at the lake and exercise; but they're only able to hunt when bugs are flying.

Bats utilize a sophisticated ultrasonic system of navigation and finding prey known as echolocation. By emitting high-pitched sounds (inaudible to human ears) from their mouths and monitoring the bounced sound waves with super-sensitive ears, they locate and eat flying insects at the rate of up to 1,000 per hour while navigating through woods, around buildings and people, and avoiding collisions. Bats also emit a wide range of sounds audible to humans known as “colony chatter,” a sophisticated form of communication between members.



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- * Pollinators—Over 300 species of fruit depend upon bats for pollination (bananas, mangoes, avocados)
- * Few natural predators; disease is biggest threat
- * Not all bats hibernate; some migrate to warmer climate
- * Bats are the only flying mammal.
- * Bats may be small, but they can be fast. How fast depends on the species, but they can reach speeds over 100 miles per hour.





- * The longest-living bat is 41 years old. Although most bats live less than 20 years in the wild, scientists have documented six species that live more than 30 years. In 2006, a tiny bat from Siberia set the world record at 41 years.
- * Like cats, bats clean themselves. Far from being dirty, bats spend a lot of time grooming themselves.