

In the distant past, many people thought bats had magical powers, but times have changed. At Eagle Creek, Arizona, the bat population dropped from thirty million to thirty thousand in six years. Since most bats stay in darkness during the day and do their feeding at night, they do not use their vision to maneuver in the dark but use a process called echolocation. This process enables bats to emit sounds from their mouths that bounce and allow them to avoid the objects when flying. Some are killed by predators such as owls, hawks, snakes and other meat-eating creatures, but most are victims of pesticides and other human intrusions. Typically, insect-eating bats emerge at dusk and fly to streams or ponds where they feed. Other types of bats feed on flowers, pollen, nectar, and fruit or on small animals such as birds, mice, lizards, and frogs. In many tropical rain forests, fruit-eating bats are the main means of spreading the seeds of tropical fruits. If it were not for bats, we might not have peaches, bananas, mangoes, guavas, figs, or dates. Bats often have been burdened with a bad reputation, perhaps because they are not the warm, cuddly sort of animal we love to love however, their unusual physical features should not overestimate their harm or to underestimate their value. They catch the insects on their wingtip or tail membrane and fling them into their mouths while flying. There are about 1,000 species of bat, ranging in size from the bumblebee bat, which is about an inch long, to the flying fox, which is sixteen inches long and has a wingspan of five feet. Unfortunately, in an attempt to control vampire bat populations, farmers ..have unintentionally killed thousands of beneficial fruit-and insect-eating bats as well