

# Bats in the belfry

One of the most common pests in some homes occupy space during the day, vacate at night, and sometimes even invades the premises. They are little brown bats, the most abundant of all the bat species.

It ranges from the coast of Labrador across the Northwest Territories and central Yukon to Alaska. In the United States it is known from much of Alaska and all the northern states, ranging southward in the mountains to Georgia and southern California.

The little brown bats, *Myotis lucifugus*, are insectivores, eating moths, wasps, beetles, gnats, mosquitoes, midges and mayflies, among others. Since many of their preferred meals are insects with an aquatic life stage, such as mosquitoes, they prefer to roost near water. They locate their prey by using echoes of sonar waves (echolocation). Often, they will catch larger prey with a wingtip, transfer it to a cup formed by their tail, then eat it — smaller prey are usually just caught in the mouth. They often use the same routes over and over again every night.

An adult can usually fill its stomach in 15 minutes; young have more difficulty. If they do not catch any food, they will enter into a state of suspended animation, similar to hibernation, that day, awakening at night to hunt again.

The typical wingspan of a little brown bat is 8-1/2 - 11 inches, and the body is 2-1/2 to 4 inches long. All teeth, including molars, are relatively sharp, as is typical for an insectivore, and canines are prominent to enable grasping hard-bodied insects in flight.

In summer, the little brown bat inhabits trees, bat houses, and buildings, usually choosing a hot attic, where nursery colonies of hundreds and even thousands form. Less frequently colonies form beneath tar paper, siding, shingles, or other similar sheltered spots.

On summer days, hundreds may hang upside down in a attic or loft. These sleeping groups are composed solely of females and young, because the species separates by sex before the young are born. Males also roost during the day but usually as solitary individuals.

Little brown bats mate in the autumn, before hibernation begins, and the infants are conceived in the spring. When they arise in the spring, the females go to nursery colonies which may often be the same place where they were born. The young are born with their eyes closed, but they will open on the second day. They learn to fly at three weeks old, and are adult size by four weeks.

Bats have been known to live up to 33 years old, males living longer on average, though the average lifespan is shorter since about 50 percent of little brown bats die in their first year.

Hawks, owls, and other birds such as common grackles kill and eat little brown bats. The list of mammal predators is long and includes mink, weasels, raccoons, and rodents. Snakes, fish

and even bullfrogs occasionally capture this species, although it is not a common occurrence.

Little brown bat populations are stable in the United States at this point, but these bats are highly susceptible to pesticide poisoning and habitat destruction. Bat houses may be one important way to insure the bats' survival. Many states have made special considerations for

brown bats including listing them as a sensitive or protected species. Little brown bats are now at a higher threat due to white nose syndrome in eastern North America.

White nose syndrome is a poorly understood malady associated with the deaths of more than a million bats. It was first discovered in New York state in February 2006, and has since spread to all of the New England states except Maine.

It is named because of the fungal growth around the muzzles and wings of many affected animals. Scientists have identified the genus of the fungus, but little else. A loss of winter fat stores, pneumonia, and the disruption of hibernation and feeding cycles caused by warm and variable winter weather have been suggested as a cause. Also, extensive spraying of pesticides to combat West Nile virus could be a cause by directly affecting the bats or reducing insect populations, their primary source of food.

So, the next time you find bats in the belfry, although a nuisance, they may do more good than harm as an insect control mechanism. I just wouldn't want them in my house.

**Roland's trivia question of the week:**

Who holds the NFL all time record for career touchdowns?

Answer on page 15.



## SCORES & OUTDOORS

by Roland D. Hallee



little brown bat in flight

# Year-end youth festival held in Winslow



The annual Winslow Little League year-end festival was held at the Boston Avenue complex on June 26, and was, once again, a huge success. Photo by Eli Fitzgerald/Central Maine Photography



## Cal Ripken U-12 state champs

The Fairfield Cal Ripken 12-U team recently won the state championship in their age bracket. Front row, from left to right, J.T. Nutting, bat boy Rece Smith, Khri Hammock, Dylan Kelley, Ben Frazee, Nick Bryand and Evan Gard. Middle, Jacob Luce, Jared Luce, Derek Bowen, Brandon LaVerdiere, Brandon Hallee and Chad Martin. Back, coach Bob Gorman, manager Ken Smith and coach Bob Bowen.

Contributed photo

## Rooting on the Patriots



This group of central Maine New England Patriots fans had the opportunity to travel to Gillette Stadium, in Foxborough, Massachusetts, on August 12 to see the pre-season game against the Super Bowl champion New Orleans Saints, courtesy of radio station B-98.5. The Patriots won the game.

Contributed photo

## China Area Co-ed Softball League

Standings as of Aug. 15

	W	L	Pct.	GB
Souther Chiropractic	16	2	.889	—
Top of the Line Drywall	15	3	.833	1
I.W.S.	13	7	.650	4
Fernald's Chiropractic	13	9	.590	5
N.E.I.	10	8	.556	6
D.P. Industries	9	11	.450	8
TAM's Redemption	9	11	.450	8
Tobey's Grocery	5	15	.250	12
Pat's Pizza	2	14	.125	13
Turner Ridge Rdmpntn.	2	16	.125	14

Submitted by Mary Lockhart, league secretary.

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