



## Audubon at Home in Northern Virginia



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### Little Brown Bat (*Myotis lucifugus*)

The little brown bat is the most widespread of the many bat species of North America. This 3-5", 1/8-1/2oz bat is glossy brown with a lighter brown underside. So far, they have been able to adapt to human encroachment and find shelter in buildings, mines, and other structures, as well as their traditional trees and caves. They can eat 50% of their body weight in insects each evening. Most temperate zone bats either migrate or hibernate, but the little brown bat does both. A brooding colony ranges from a few individuals to 1,000 depending on the suitability of space. They can live more than 30 years, although an estimated 50% die in their first year. If undisturbed, they use the same hibernation and summer roosting sites year after year. These mosquito-eating machines are in decline due to pesticides, pollution and habitat destruction, especially of roosting habitat.

#### What Little Brown Bats Need

**Food:** This small insectivore can eat over 1,000 insects in an hour, concentrating primarily on insects that have an aquatic larval stage, such as mosquitoes, midges and mayflies, but also eating moths, wasps, and other flying insects over open land. They use the same hunting routes every night and often use rivers and streams as travel corridors. Feeding is most intense at dusk.

**Breeding:** After mating in the fall, a single infant is born in the spring. In summer, adults live apart. Females raise the young in dark, warm sites such as hollow tree cavities, caves, barns, and attics. Single males roost behind shutters, under bark and shingles, and in rock crevices.

**Shelter:** Hibernating in clusters in winter, they seek caves, mines and tree cavities with high humidity and a constant temperature of around 40°F. Numerous predators feed on little brown bats, including raccoons, hawks, owls, and snakes. Therefore, they seek roosts that provide protection from predators while still being close to food and water sources.

**Other:** Conflicts occasionally arise when bats move in where they are not wanted.

#### Resources:

Birdbaths—local wild bird stores

Pond liners—local home improvement centers

Native plants—available at Hyla Brook Farm, DeBaggio Herbs, Nature By Design, Merrifield Garden Center and other local nurseries

#### Model Little Brown Bat Habitats:

Webb Sanctuary—[www.audubonnaturalist.org/default.asp?page=516](http://www.audubonnaturalist.org/default.asp?page=516)

Meadowlark Gardens Regional Park—[www.nvrpa.org/meadowlark.html](http://www.nvrpa.org/meadowlark.html)

Banshee Reeks Nature Preserve—[www.bansheereeks.org/](http://www.bansheereeks.org/)

#### How You Can Help

- Plant a night-blooming flower garden to attract moths.
- Reduce pesticide use. Pollution and pesticides not only reduce the food supply for bats, but potentially can poison the bats themselves.
- Install a small pond, to attract a wider variety of insects.\*
- Birdbaths can supply drinking water.
- Conserve natural roosting sites, such as dead trees and tree cavities. If a dead tree is a threat to your or your neighbor's property, cut off the crown of the tree to remove the weight at the top. The more of the trunk you can leave in place the better it will serve as habitat for bats and other local wildlife.
- Support the protection of caves.
- Avoid disturbing bats during hibernation as this burns vital energy reserves. Since insects are available only seasonally, bats may not be able to compensate for energy lost in winter.
- Bat houses placed in an area that receives at least 4hrs of sun exposure and in proximity to water will most effectively attract tenants. In this region, bat houses should be a natural wood brown or painted brown to best regulate temperatures.
- To remove bats from a building, consult wildlife experts to remove them without harming them or your property.

Visit [audubonva.org](http://audubonva.org) for more information and other fact sheets

\*Bt rings can be used if you still have a mosquito population. Bt is a naturally occurring bacteria that only attacks fly larvae.