



Working the Night Shift – Biometric Clues (Eastern U.S.)

Background

EXPLORATION QUESTION

“Why do we need to study bats and what methods can we use?”

MATERIALS

- Toothpicks (cut to size)
- Bat models or lunch bags with paper clips/beans/sand inside
- Metric rulers
- Metric scales (less than 30 grams)
- Latex, vinyl, or cloth gloves
- Student Inquiry, Instruction, and Evaluation Sheets
- Bat Survey Data Forms
- Dichotomous Key
- Identifying Features (table)
- Clue cards for each bat species
- PowerPoint presentation (optional)
- PowerPoint narrative (optional)

OVERVIEW

Students will learn and perform data collection techniques used in the field by bat biologists. They will measure and weigh “bat models,” record data, and determine bat identification by using data collected, clue cards, and a dichotomous key. Students will also learn about White-Nose Syndrome and other threats to bats.

VOCABULARY

Biometric, calcar, endangered, extinction, forearm, fungus, harp trap, hibernate, membrane, mist net, species, tragus

GROUP SIZE

Any

AGE

13 and above (variations included for younger and older students)

In general, bats are difficult to study because they are active at night, extremely fast fliers, roost in inconspicuous places (like caves and cracks in bridges), and they can move great distances in short periods of time. For these reasons, one of the greatest limitations to the conservation of bats is a lack of information on basic bat biology and ecology.

Although bats account for almost a quarter of all mammal species (there are more than 1,300 species of bats worldwide), bats are by far the least studied of all mammals. Bats occupy almost every habitat in the world eating tons of insects nightly, pollinating flowers, and dispersing seeds that grow new plants and even trees. Bats are our most important natural predators of night-flying insects consuming mosquitoes, moths, beetles, crickets, leafhoppers, chinch bugs, and much more! Many of these insects are serious crop or forest pests, and others spread disease to humans or livestock. Every year bats save us billions of dollars in pest control by simply eating insects. All but four of the 47 bat species found in the United States and Canada feed solely on insects. The remaining species feed on nectar, pollen, and the fruit of cacti and agaves in southwestern deserts.

Are bats in trouble?

Bats are in decline nearly everywhere they are found. Bat numbers in the United States and Canada have declined dramatically as a new disease, White-Nose Syndrome (WNS), has killed over six million bats in just six years. This disease is killing bats as they hibernate in caves and mines. Named for a cold-loving, white fungus typically found on the faces and wings of infected bats, WNS causes bats to awaken more often during hibernation. As a result, they use up their stored fat reserves which are needed to get them through the winter. Affected bats often emerge too soon from hibernation and are seen flying around in winter. These bats usually freeze or starve to death. More than half of the bats that live in the United States hibernate in caves and mines to survive the winter. Four of these bats are federally endangered (Indiana, gray, Virginia and Ozark big-eared bats) and live within or near WNS-affected areas.

The impact of WNS is frightening! Up to 99% of bats in some WNS-infected populations die within a few years. Little brown bats, once the most common bat in the northeastern United States, may be in danger of regional extinction within the next 15 years. Yet, WNS is just one of many threats that face bat populations. Other threats include habitat loss, pesticide use, wind energy development, oil and gas exploration, residential and industrial development, disturbance of hibernating bats, and improper eviction of bats from buildings. There is an urgent need to protect our bats!

In the United States, nearly 40 percent of our bats are endangered or are considered at risk. For example, gray bats were among our most abundant mammals just a century ago. Now, they are federally endangered which means they are in danger of extinction within the foreseeable future throughout all or a significant portion of their range.

How do we learn about bats?

One way that bat biologists gather information about bats is by conducting surveys. Surveying bats helps us learn what bat species are living in a given area (during a particular season) and how their populations are doing. By monitoring bats we can discover the factors that are important for their survival and identify which species need action now. We can also learn which areas are important for bats and need to be protected. When surveys are conducted year after year, biologist can detect increases or decreases in the size of a bat population. This long-term monitoring may be critical to understanding the overall impact of WNS and other threats to bats.

Bat biologists often conduct annual surveys to learn about bats by using mist nets, harp traps, or by observing bats in caves during hibernation. These types of studies allow easy standardization of data collection, hands-on examination, and reduce the chance of misidentifying species. Some species of bats can be difficult to identify and scientists must use a variety of characteristics to determine a bat's species. Your students will have a chance to hone their identification skills by learning some of these characteristics and by using a dichotomous key to learn others.

How do scientists tell one type of bat species from another?

To identify a bat, it is necessary to recognize the features that distinguish one species from another. Before you can give a bat a species name, you must first sort features of the animal into groups of similar and dissimilar traits. Biologists collect biometric data (measuring right forearm lengths, weighing bats, observing fur color, etc.) to identify bat species. This can be done very quickly by using a dichotomous key. Such keys include minute details about shapes and sizes of the parts of organisms that are being keyed out. Most bats that are found in the United

States are not difficult to sort and identify into basic types when you know what characteristics to focus on. Others, like myotis species, are difficult to distinguish and morphological measurements are a necessity. And in some cases, biologists may even have to resort to genetics to determine species.

Where do you search for bats?

Bats use a variety of habitat types. When selecting sites to survey for bats, scientists often choose potential travel corridors, such as wooded streams, trails, and maintained rights-of-way. Rivers, streams, ponds, and lakes are also good places to search for bats because many bat species hunt for insects over water and almost all need to drink daily. Some bats use caves or other natural cavities such as rock outcrops with crevices, cliff faces, or even exfoliating bark on trees to roost, hibernate, and raise their young.

Bats can even be found in buildings. Agricultural buildings (e.g. farmhouses, barns, and outbuildings) of traditional wood, brick, or stone construction and/or with exposed wooden beams, and buildings and structures with slate roofs, stone walls, hanging slates, hanging tiles or weather boarding, are attractive to bats. This is especially true when these buildings are located near woods and/or water. Bats are also found in structures such as tunnels, mines, cellars, air raid shelters, bridge structures, and aqueducts. You just never know where you might find a bat!

Get Ready – Set Up Stations

1. Set up stations for each bat species to be measured.
2. Use the table, "Lengths and Weights - Bat Measurement Stations," to cut toothpicks to the correct length and to fill lunch bags with the correct weight. If you have bat models, place them at each station.

Each station needs:

- Gloves
- Toothpick cut to proper length (measure length of toothpick in millimeters)
- Bag with paper clips/beans/sand (weigh bag contents in grams) or bat model
- Clue card for one bat species
- Metric Ruler and metric scale

Get Set -Background Activities

1. Provide students with copies of the Student Inquiry Sheet.
2. Pose the questions on the sheet to students and ask them to design a data collection protocol for bat species identification through answering these questions or other questions they might develop.
3. Explain how bat biologists collect data on individual bats using the PowerPoint presentation, "Working the Night Shift –Biometric Clues." You could give students copies of the PowerPoint note pages and/or copies of the Background Information.

Go! - Measurement and Identification Activity

1. Give the students the following handouts and have them move to the stations:
 - Student Instruction Sheet
 - Bat Survey Data Form (for recording measurements and observations)
 - Dichotomous Key for "Working the Night Shift - Eastern U.S. Bat Species"
 - Optional – PowerPoint Notes Page from presentation to take notes on or write down follow-up questions
2. At the stations have the students work through the instructions on the Student Instruction Sheet.
3. After students have identified all of their bat species, provide them with copies of the table Eastern U.S. Bat Species: Identifying Features. Have the students verify their identifications are correct.

Go Even Further – Additional Activities

Here are a few additional activities that you can do with the students. These activities will build on how scientists collect data to study bats.

Please see "Further Reading Resources" for links to these resources.

- Read aloud one or more paragraphs of "An interview with Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum Bat Biologist – Karen Krebbs"
- Watch "The Battle for Bats: Surviving White-Nose Syndrome" (14 minutes). Ask students to list at least five ways bat biologists collect

data.

- See scientists measuring bats, watch the interview with John Whitaker in "Cave: Life beneath the Forest" (4 minutes).
- Remind your students that now bat biologists ALWAYS wear gloves when handling bats.

1. Provide students with copies of the Student Evaluation Sheet.

2. Allow the students discussion time on how their data collection process related to the scientists in the films. Also allow for the students to discuss what can be learned by collecting bat data and how that data can be used. For example, what management actions might need to be implemented on the national forest to help protect bats?

Reflect – Evaluation

1. Accurately measure forearm lengths and bat weights
2. Record all data completely.
3. Correctly navigate the dichotomous key.
4. Correctly identify bat species and include supporting evidence.
5. Correctly answer questions about bat data collection. (Refer to "Teacher Answer Page" for general answers).

Extension - Install a Bat House

Installing a backyard bat house is a great way to provide a home for bats and to collect real-world data on a bat population. Bat houses are especially important in areas where there are few natural roosting sites such as large trees or caves. There are a variety of designs of bat houses and you can either make your own or purchase one. Consider placing a bat house in your community or encourage students to install one in their own backyard. One thing is for sure; your bat-tenants will pay you back with some wonderful benefits.

Bats are amazing animals that are vital to the health of our environment and economy eating tons of insects nightly. In temperate latitudes, like the United States, the bat species that are most likely to occupy a backyard bat house are insectivores that eat agricultural pests and some of the nasty bugs that harass outdoor gatherings (a.k.a. mosquitoes).

Your students will enjoy learning more about bats as they watch them come and go from the home you provided. And homes are often in short supply for bats. Their populations are declining around the world, often because of disappearing habitat.

Bats need time to find and explore new homes, so it may take a few years before your bat house has residents. Once they arrive, your students can start a monitoring program to count bats. The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources has great information about their program and this could easily be modified for your home or classroom.

Consider building your bat boxes out of materials that are repurposed from other uses. For example, the Organization for Bat Conservation has been helping scouts build bat boxes out of used wood pallets. Can you think of other materials that could be used to build bat boxes? What about no longer needed wood furniture?

Just remember, if you use scrap wood that has been pressure-treated, it can only be used if you paint or stain over it. Pressure-treated wood contains chemicals that may be toxic to bats.

Suggested Resources:

Bat Conservation International - Artificial roosts
<http://www.batcon.org/index.php/resources/for-specific-issues/artificial-roosts>

Bat Conservation International – Install a bat house
<http://www.batcon.org/index.php/resources/getting-involved/install-a-bat-house?highlight=WyJiYXQiLCJob3VzZSIsImJhdCBob3VzZSjd>

Organization of Bat Conservation – Why bat houses are important
<http://www.batconservation.org/bat-houses>

Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources – Build a bat house
<http://dnr.wi.gov/topic/wildlifehabitat/bathouse.html>

Wisconsin Bat Program –Monitoring Program
<http://wiatri.net/Inventory/Bats/>

Further Reading and Resources – Discover More

About Bat Biologists:

An interview with Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum Bat Biologist – Karen Krebbs
www.desertmuseum.org/kids/bats/bat_biologist.php

An interview with John Whitaker in “Cave: Life Beneath the Forest” at
www.cavebiota.com/media/whitaker1.wmv

Discovery Channel. Dirty Jobs: Bat Biologist
www.discovery.com/tv-shows/dirty-jobs/videos/bat-biologist.htm

About Bats:

Bats in Your State - Species Profiles -
<http://www.batcon.org/index.php/resources/media-education/species-profiles>.

Hanging Around with Bats -
<http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/learning/resources/keep-exaswild/bats/>

About White-Nose Syndrome:

Battle for Bats: Surviving White-nose Syndrome -
<http://vimeo.com/76705033>

National White-Nose Syndrome (WNS) Website –
<http://whitenosesyndrome.org/>



Lengths and Weights - Bat Measurement Stations

Bat Species	Right Forearm Length* (toothpick length in millimeters)	Body Mass* (paperclips/beans/sand in grams)
Big brown bat <i>Eptesicus fuscus</i>	44 – 48 47	13 – 25 17
Gray bat <i>Myotis grisescens</i>	41 – 46 44	5 – 10 6
Indiana bat <i>Myotis sodalis</i>	36 – 40 38	5 – 11 7
Little brown bat <i>Myotis lucifugus</i>	35 – 40 35	5 – 14 7
Northern long-eared bat <i>Myotis septentrionalis</i>	35 – 39 35	5 – 10 5
Tri-colored bat <i>Perimyotis subflavus</i>	32 – 34 33	4 – 7 4
Virginia big-eared bat <i>Corynorhinus townsendii virginianus</i>	42 – 47 45	9 – 12 11

* We have provided examples for these measurements in case you wish to make your own bat models. These numbers will maximize the number of similar sizes that you will need to cut out. You can use any number within the range listed.



Teacher Answer Page

1. What kinds of data do bat biologists collect? How do they collect the data?

- Time
- Temperature
- Sex
- Condition of Wing
- Date
- Weight (in grams)
- Fur color and length
- Length measurements (ear, forearm, toe hair length, tragus, etc.)
- Location of Survey
- Age (juvenile or adult)
- Presence of Calcar
- Reproductive Condition

2. Why do bat biologists need biometric data from individual bats? Why do they make detailed records of the data?

- To identify bat species
- To quantify bat's health
- To track the health of bats over time – Are there changes in wing damage or weights?
- To determine a range of sizes for particular bat species
- To determine sex ratios and reproductive condition/success

3. Why do bat biologists need several kinds of information (biometric measurements, physical characteristics observations, behavioral observations) to correctly identify bat species?

Some bats have very similar appearances and even the length of their forearm and weight may be the same. Bat biologists need to look at a variety of information to correctly identify individual bat species. For example, a keeled calcar is one of the key diagnostic features that helps distinguish the Indiana bat from the little brown bat. These species are often very confusing for people just learning to identify bats.

4. If bat biologists had good baseline data, what changes in the data would they observe after White-Nose Syndrome has infected bats in an area?

- Fewer bats
- Some species may be affected more by WNS than other species
- Lower body weights
- Bats may not be reproducing as a result of poor health or a lack of mates
- More wing lesions

Bat Clue Cards:

Bat 1 is the big brown bat

Bat 3 is the Indiana bat

Bat 5 is the northern long-eared bat

Bat 7 is the Virginia big-eared bat

Bat 2 is the gray bat

Bat 4 is the little brown bat

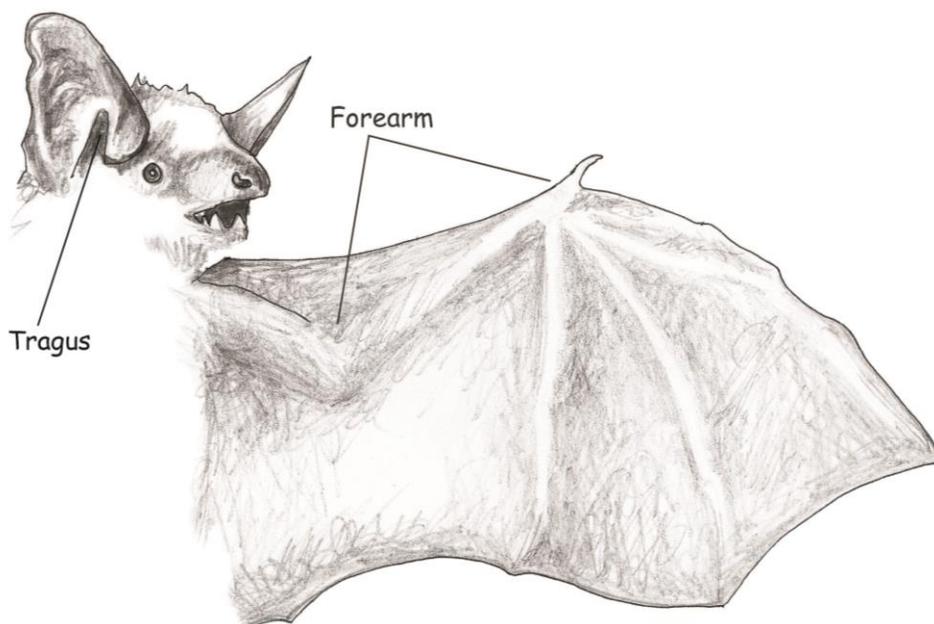
Bat 6 is the tricolored bat



Teacher Definition Pages

Calcar – a projection of cartilage that extends from the ankle of a bat along the edge of the tail membrane towards the tail; provides support during aerial turns.

Forearm - the part of a mammal's arm extending from the wrist to the elbow; in bats, measurements of its length are often used to identify one species from another.



Muzzle – the nose and mouth of an animal. When WNS is present on a bat, it is often seen on the muzzle.

Tragus – a tiny fingerlike projection of skin-covered cartilage in front of a bat's ear.

Keeled Calcar – a well-defined spur made of cartilage that extends from the ankle towards the tail.



A. Calcar Not Keeled



B. Calcar Keeled

Tail Membrane – the area of skin which joins the legs and/or tail of a bat. The membrane may attach at the ankle or at the toe. This can be important for species identification.

Variation for Older Students:

Bat biologists also record information on the sex of each bat collected and their reproductive condition (e.g. are females lactating). Ask students why this information is important and what management strategies might be developed from this information.

- A skewed sex ratio may indicate that one species is migrating earlier or later than the other (depending on the time of year).
- If only females or females and young are captured during surveys, you may have a maternity colony nearby - something worthy of finding and protecting.
- A main focus now is to determine if White-Nose Syndrome is having an impact on sex ratios and reproduction rate. This is an important issue because bats have such a low reproductive rate. Most bats in North America only have one pup a year. Think about how long it would take to rebuild a population that was reduced by 90% or more!



PowerPoint Narrative

How do bat biologists identify bat species?

How do you think bat biologists can determine a bat's species? If you were going to collect data on a bat, what information would you need to help you determine a bat's species? What data would you collect? How would you collect the data? Where would you go to collect your data? A river? A forest? Your backyard?

One of the ways bat biologists study bats is by catching them, collecting biometric data (measuring right forearm lengths, weighing bats, looking at the color of fur, etc.), making observations, and using that information to identify species.

Where do bat biologists find bats?

Bats live in a wide variety of habitats. In the eastern United States, bat biologists look for bats near rivers and lakes where bats are hunting for insects or grabbing a drink of water. The top photo shows mist nets strung between two aluminum poles. Mist nets are usually made of nylon mesh suspended between two poles, resembling an oversized volleyball net. When properly set up, the nets are virtually invisible. You can't see the net and neither can the bats! Bats can also be found in forests and caves.

How do bat biologist catch bats?

Bat biologists catch bats in mist nets and harp traps. Harp traps are a metal frame strung with vertical monofilament line (like fishing line) with a bag at the bottom. Bats drop down to the bottom of the trap and are easily removed by biologists.

If bats are roosting in a cave, biologists can also just gently take them off the walls or ceiling of the cave, or they may just make observations of the bats. Sometimes, biologists even count the number of bats by using grids. Because bat biologists usually work at night or in caves, they need special clothing and lights.

How do bat biologists handle bats?

Bats are small and have delicate wings. To minimize damaging bat wings, biologists have special training and experience. Bat biologists always wear gloves when handling bats to avoid transmitting diseases to the bats and to avoid being bitten by bats. You should NEVER handle wild animals unless you have proper equipment, training, and vaccinations.

Why are there pictures of lunch bags on this page? Biologists actually store bats in lunch bags to keep them calm while transporting bats short distances and when there are lots of bats to identify and measure. Lunch bags are inexpensive.

Biometric measurements - right forearm

It's relatively easy for a trained biologist to hold a bat and extend the bat's wing in order to measure the right forearm. The forearm of a bat is the small bone at the top of the wing membrane, between the elbow and the thumb. Using a caliper or ruler, a biologist measures the length of the bat's right forearm, recording the data in millimeters.

Bat wings are one of the most remarkable features of a bat. A bat's wing is actually a modified hand and the wing bones are elongated fingers. This elongation of the bones is required to support the wing membrane. Compare the bones of the wing to the fingers on a human hand. Also point out the thumb. The thumb has a small claw, which aids the bat in crawling around on rough surfaces.

Biometric measurements - weighing bats

A bat can be weighed while it's still in a lunch bag or the bat can be transferred to a plastic container. When you do this step, remember that you need to tare the weight using an empty bag or container first. Bat biologists usually use a pan scale or a spring scale and record the bat's weight in grams.

Biometric clues - examining bat wings

Bat wings hold clues about a bat's health and can sometimes show if the bat has been infected with the fungus that causes White-Nose Syndrome. Bat wings are gently extended and held over a light box for careful examination. Do you see the difference between the healthy bat wing and the damaged bat wing? Sometimes bat biologists even use ultraviolet light to check for White-Nose Syndrome lesions on bat wings. What do you think would happen if a bat's wing was badly damaged?

The membrane of a bat's wing is living tissue similar to the tiny flaps of skin joining the bases of our human fingers. Bats have a much larger membrane of skin that joins their long fingers from the bases to the tips. A bat's fingers cannot flex independently, but the muscles in the arm can open up the hand. Do you think a bat's wing can heal over time?

Yes, sometimes bats get tears in their wings. A small tear in the wing up to about an inch doesn't cause the bat much trouble in flight. Since the bat's wing is living tissue, it can heal itself. But, if the wing is torn too badly, and the bat can't fly, then the bat would not be able to feed itself.

Observing physical and behavioral characteristics

You might spend a lot of time with your pet cat or dog. You can recognize them instantly! But what if a similar looking animal appeared on your front porch? Would you know if it was really your pet?

Bat biologists also spend a lot of time looking at bats. Sometimes they can instantly recognize a bat's species. Often it's more difficult. Scientists look at many physical characteristics to help identify bats. These include: age (juvenile or adult), sex, overall size, fur color, fur length, ear size, tragus size, tail membrane, calcar, and toe hair length. Explain some of the parts of the bat that students might not be familiar with including the tragus, calcar, and tail membrane.

A keeled calcar is a well-defined spur made of cartilage that extends from the ankle towards the tail. It provides support during aerial turns. The tragus is a tiny fingerlike projection of skin-covered cartilage in front of a bat's ear (after the activity, encourage students to look into the purpose of the tragus). The tail membrane is the skin which joins the legs and/or tail of a bat. The membrane may attach at the ankle or at the toe. All of these characteristic can be important for species identification.

Recording data

Now the biologists have all of this information. What do they do with it? First, they need to record it so they can refer to it later. Accurate records are really important for bat surveys. For example, bat biologists might want to compare bats' weight and health to previous years.

Who am I? Collecting your data

You, the bat biologist, will be recording the data that you observe on your Bat Survey Data Form including:

Time	Location	Weather
Weight	Right forearm length	Other Physical characteristics
Date	Behavioral characteristics	

You will take this data and use the dichotomous key to be sure to list the evidence that supports your identification of the bat species.

Start Your Bat Survey- Measurement and Identification Activity

1. Put on gloves to do these activities. Bat biologists now always work while wearing gloves. You might find that it's a little bit harder to do detailed work when you are wearing gloves. Why do you think it is important to wear gloves?
2. Weigh an empty lunch bag. Remember, you need to tare the weight at each station or you can subtract the weight of a bag from every bat weight measurement.
3. Make weight measurements of all bat models/lunch bags and measure toothpicks which represent the bat's right forearm. Be sure to record your data and information from the clue card on your Bat Survey Data Form. Include information about the bat's physical and behavioral characteristics.
4. Use your recorded data and the dichotomous key to determine the bat's species. Are you confident that you have made the correct identification? Be sure to write down any evidence that supports your identification of the bat species. Were any species similar? Do you think you could collect this data at night?
5. Use the Eastern U.S. Bat Species: Identifying Features to verify your findings.

Student Evaluation Sheet

What Did You Learn?

1. What kinds of data do bat biologists collect? How do they collect the data?

2. How did your data collection design match up to the activities performed in this activity? Did you identify the same types of information to collect to help you determine a bat's species?

3. Why do bat biologists need biometric data from individual bats? Why do they make detailed records of the data?

4. Why do bat biologists need several kinds of information (biometric measurements, physical characteristics observations, and behavioral observations) to correctly identify bat species?

5. If bat biologists had good baseline data about a bat population, what changes in the data would they observe after White-Nose Syndrome has infected bats in an area?

6. Do you think it is important to help bats?

7. How could you help bats around your school or home?

Bat Survey Data Form

Bat Biologist's Name: _____ Survey Location: _____

Date of Observation: _____ Time of Observation: _____ Weather Conditions: _____

Station Number	Right Forearm Length	Weight of Bat	Physical Characteristics	Behavioral Characteristics	Species Name	Evidence that Supports Your Identification of the Bat Species
1.						
2.						
3.						
4.						

Bat Survey Data Form

Bat Biologist's Name: _____ Survey Location: _____

Date of Observation: _____ Time of Observation: _____ Weather Conditions: _____

Station Number	Right Forearm Length	Weight of Bat	Physical Characteristics	Behavioral Characteristics	Species Name	Evidence that Supports Your Identification of the Bat Species
5.						
6.						
7.						

Other Observations: _____

Eastern U.S. Bat Species: Identifying Features

Bat species	Right forearm length (range in mm)	Body mass (range in grams)	Physical characteristics	Behavioral characteristics
Big brown bat <i>Eptesicus fuscus</i>	44 – 48	13 – 25	Large bat Distinctive brown fur Keel on calcar	Often found living in buildings Use many habitats
Gray bat <i>Myotis grisescens</i>	41 – 46	5 – 10	Tail membrane attaches at ankle (not at toe) No keel on calcar	Use caves all year, prefers to hunt over water
Indiana bat <i>Myotis sodalis</i>	36 – 40	5 – 11	Slightly keeled calcar Short toe hairs Less gradation of belly and back fur	Nickname “social myotis” because they pack tightly together when roosting
Little brown bat <i>Myotis lucifugus</i>	35 – 40	5 – 14	Feet bigger than Indiana bats, belly and back fur are different colors Toe hairs longer than toes No keel on calcar	Often found living in buildings Hibernate in large colonies in cool, humid caves
Northern long-eared bat <i>Myotis septentrionalis</i>	35 – 39	5 – 10	Ears longer than other myotis bats Ear extends beyond nose by several mm if you lay ears forward Tragus is long and pointed	Often hunts under the tree canopy. Take down larger insects, carrying their catch to a branch to settle down and eat.
Tri-colored bat <i>Perimyotis subflavus</i>	32 – 34	4 – 7	Pink forearm Individual fur is tri-colored Small bats	Often roost alone
Virginia big-eared bat <i>Corynorhinus townsendii virginianus</i>	42 – 47	9 – 12	Really big ears, over 25 mm long	Use caves all year Prefer colder sections of caves

DICHOTOMOUS KEY

Working the Night Shift - Eastern U.S. Bat Species

1. A. Ears enormous, over 25 mm from notch to tip ***Corynorhinus townsendii virginianus***
B. Ears less than 25 mm from notch to tip Go to 2
2. A. Calcar keeled Go to 3
B. Calcar not keeled Go to 4
3. A. Right forearm greater than 42 mm ***Eptesicus fuscus***
B. Right forearm less than 42 mm ***Myotis sodalis***
4. A. Wing membrane attaches to the foot at ankle (not at toe); hair on back uniformly colored from base to tip ***Myotis grisescens***
B. Wing membrane attaches to the foot at toe; hair on back not uniformly colored from base to tip Go to 5
5. A. Fur tricolored from base to tip; right forearm less than 35 mm, tragus short and rounded ***Perimyotis subflavus***
B. Fur not tricolored from base to tip Go to 6
6. A. Tragus long thin and pointed at tip; ears longer than 17 mm ***Myotis septentrionalis***
B. Tragus relatively short, rounded at tip; ears less than 17 mm ***Myotis lucifugus***

Clue Cards - Who Am I?



Photo by U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Bat 1 - Physical Characteristics

Ear Length: 16 – 20 millimeters (from notch to tip)

Calcar: keeled

Fur Color: tan to dark, chocolate brown

Tragus: broad with rounded tip

Other: robust jaws and teeth – feeds largely on beetles

Bat 1 - Behavioral Characteristics

- I use many habitats from lowland deserts to timberline meadows.
- I am often found living in buildings.
- I'm very beneficial – eating significant crop and forest pests including ground beetles, scarab beetles, cucumber beetles, snout beetles and stink bugs, as well as many species of moths and leafhoppers.
- I hibernate in caves.



Photo by U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Bat 2 - Physical Characteristics

Ear Length: 12 – 15 millimeters (from notch to tip)

Calcar: not keeled

Fur Color: darkish gray brown, hairs are uniform in color

Other: wing membrane attaches at ankle joint, not at the base of the toes

Bat 2 - Behavioral Characteristics

- I prefer hunting over water.
- I eat mosquitoes, caddis flies, stone flies, and other aquatic insects.
- I am very sensitive to disturbance. If disturbed, very young bats of my species may drop off the cave wall to the floor or into a stream.
- I use caves year round.
- I am Federally Endangered.



Photo by U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Bat 3 - Physical Characteristics

Ear Length: 9-15 millimeters (from notch to tip)

Calcar: slightly keeled

Fur Color: dull brown fur, faintly bi-colored

Other: small foot around 7 millimeters long

Bat 3 - Behavioral Characteristics

- My nickname is “social myotis” because I like to pack tightly together when roosting.
- I hibernate in caves, typically larger and cooler ones.
- I am Federally Endangered.
- I am vulnerable to disturbance because I hibernate in large numbers in only a few caves (the largest hibernation caves support from 20,000 to 50,000 bats).



Photo by U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Bat 4 - Physical Characteristics

Ear Length: 12 - 15 millimeters (from notch to tip)

Calcar: not keeled

Fur Color: yellowish brown to olive brown, belly fur and back fur are slightly different color

Other: toe hairs longer than toes and wing membrane attaches to foot at toe

Tragus: relatively short and rounded at tip

Bat 4 - Behavioral Characteristics

- I am often found living in buildings
- I enjoy eating a variety of insects including midges, mosquitoes, mayflies, caddisflies, moths, beetles, and crane flies.
- My populations have been hit hard by White-Nose Syndrome.
- I hibernate in large colonies in cool, humid caves.

Clue Cards - Who Am I?



Photo by Al Hicks, NY DEC

Bat 5 - Physical Characteristics

Ear Length: 15-19 millimeters (from notch to tip)

Calcar: not keeled

Fur Color: reddish brown to brown

Other: ear extends beyond nose by several millimeters if you lay ears forward and the tragus is long and pointed. Wing membrane attaches to foot at toe.

Bat 5 - Behavioral Characteristics

- While small insects like caddisflies make up a large part of my diet, I can also take down larger prey. To eat the larger food, I carry my catch to a branch and settle down to eat.
- Populations of my species have been hit hard by White-Nose Syndrome.
- In summer I choose dense forests and I roost with my young under exfoliating bark and in tree cavities.
- I primarily hibernate in caves.



Photo by U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Bat 6 - Physical Characteristics

Ear Length: small ears, less than 12 millimeters (from notch to tip)

Calcar: not keeled

Fur Color: fur is golden brown to reddish brown and individual hairs are distinctly tri-colored

Other: forearm is pink, tragus is short and rounded, and wing membrane attaches to foot at toe

Bat 6 - Behavioral Characteristics

- I am a generalist when it comes to eating. I feed on small beetles, wasps, flies, and moths.
- I often roost alone.
- I am one of the few North American bats that often have two pups each year.
- I hibernate in caves, mines, and rock crevices.



Photo Craig Stihler, WV DNR

Bat 7 - Physical Characteristics

Ear Length: Enormous, over 25 millimeters (from notch to tip)

Fur Color: light to dark brown

Other: facial glands on either side of the snout are quite distinctive. Bat has short toe hairs.

Bat 7 - Behavioral Characteristics

- Moths make up a big part of my diet.
- I hibernate in clusters inside of caves, typically in the cooler sections.
- I am Federally Endangered.
- I use caves year round.
- When roosting or hibernating, I curl up my long ears so they look like ram horns.

Variation for Younger Students

Consider only using three bat species for this activity that can easily be distinguished from each other. The big-brown, tri-colored, and little brown bats can be identified based solely on weight and the length of the forearm.

Have younger students take these measurements and record their data. They can use the “Eastern U.S. Bat Species: Identifying Features” table to identify the species. Students can still collect data and identify a bat without going through a dichotomous key!

Answer to clue cards can be found on Teacher Answer Page.

Variation for Older Students

If available, borrow old mist nets from a local Department of Natural Resources, Forest Service, or Fish and Wildlife Service office. You can place the nets up in a darkened room such as a gymnasium. Have students put on gloves and headlamps. They will remove the bats from the nets, take measurements, and record the data in the dark.

Bat biologists also record information on the sex of each bat collected and their reproductive condition. Ask students why this information is important and what management strategies might be developed from this information?

Answer to clue cards can be found on Teacher Answer Page.

Curriculum/Standards Connections

Science Standards

Virginia science standards are listed here as examples. You can find citations for your state's standards by searching for the key words, "dichotomous key," "species," "binomial nomenclature," and "classify or classification."

Virginia Middle School Science – Life Science Standards

LS.5 The student will investigate and understand how organisms can be classified. Key concepts include:

- a) the distinguishing characteristics of kingdoms of organisms;
- b) the distinguishing characteristics of major animal and plant phyla; and
- c) the characteristics of the species.

Skills

- compare and contrast key features and activities between organisms.
- classify organisms based on physical features.

Virginia High School Science – Biology Standards

BIO.7 The student will investigate and understand bases for modern classification systems.

Key concepts include:

- a) structural similarities among organisms;

Knowledge

- Binomial nomenclature is a standard way of identifying a species with a scientific two-word name. The first word is the genus name and the second the species name.
- A species is defined as a group of organisms that has the ability to interbreed and produce fertile offspring.

Skills

- Construct and utilize dichotomous keys to classify groups of objects and organisms.
- Describe relationships based on homologous structures.

Next Generation Science Standards

Middle School Life Science (for worksheet question and for extension activity)

MS-LS2-4. Ecosystems: Interactions, Energy, and Dynamics: Construct an argument supported by empirical evidence that changes to physical or biological components of an ecosystem affect populations.

Common Core State Standards Connections:

ELA/Literacy -

- RST.6-8.1 Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of science and technical texts. (MS-LS2-4)
- RI.8.8 Trace and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, assessing whether the reasoning is sound and the evidence is relevant and sufficient to support the claims. (MS-LS2-4)
- WHST.6-8.1 Write arguments to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence. (MS-LS2-4)
- WHST.6-8.9 Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research. (MS-LS2-4)