

Which Bat is That?

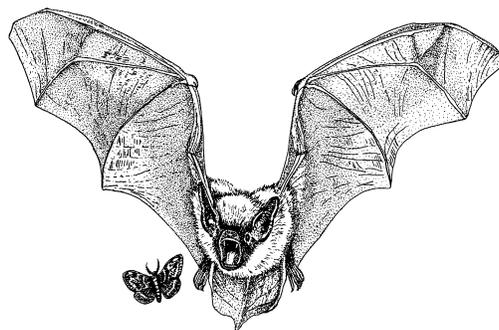
Eighteen species of bats live in Colorado and they all eat insects. Bat species are hard to tell apart, but by knowing a few facts you can guess which bat you are watching. The most likely bats in the Fort Collins area are big brown, little brown, silver-haired and hoary.

Big brown bats (*Eptesicus fuscus*) are the most commonly seen bat in Colorado. When emerging at night to forage, they make straight swift flights about 20-30 feet above the ground. They forage in open areas and eat large and small insects. They also come to outdoor lights to catch insects. They hibernate in caves, mines, and rock crevasses.

Little brown bats (*Myotis lucifugus*) forage over water or in wooded areas about 8-20 feet off the ground. Look for them along the Poudre River and its ponds. They capture food by hitting the insects with their wing tips, catching it in the membrane of their arms, and then transferring the food to their mouths. It takes lots practice to do this, and young bats must learn the technique from their parents. Some may hibernate in Colorado. Very little is known about little brown bats.

Silver-haired bats (*Lasionycteris noctvagens*) are slow flyers, feeding near woodland ponds and streams, near the ground. They are usually solitary. They roost in tree cavities and behind loose bark.

Hoary bats (*Lasiurus cinereus*) forage in open areas but they eat different insects than the big brown bat. They might be seen, along with big brown bats, near street lamps or other outdoor lights. They are in Fort Collins from April to November. They migrate to warmer climates in the winter.



Little brown bat, with mouth open, using echolocation to track a moth.

Bat Facts and Bat Myths

Myth: *Bats are blind.*

Fact: All bats can see and some have quite good eyesight.

Myth: *Bats get tangled up in people's hair.*

Fact: Bats navigate and catch tiny insects using echolocation. This system is extremely refined and more sophisticated than radar. Bats can detect single strands of human hair and can easily avoid your hair. This myth may have gotten started by bats catching insects that were attracted to humans. They were actually helping us out!

Myth: *Bats have super-natural powers.*

Fact: Bats actually have super-sensory abilities. They can navigate very well at night because of these abilities. They are active at night because that's when insects are most active.

Myth: *Bats are flying mice.*

Fact: Bats are not rodents; they are the only mammal that can fly.

Myth: *Bats have lots of litters every year.*

Fact: Most bat mothers produce only one baby per year. They lavish them with attention, making sure they have lots to eat and that they learn how to move around safely. Some bats even carry their babies with them when foraging at night. Because of their slow reproductive rate, bat populations are unable to recover quickly from disturbances.

Myth: *Most bats have rabies.*

Fact: Like all mammals, bats can get rabies. However, only 1/2 of 1% of bats contract rabies. When they do, they are very sick and usually die. If you see a bat on the ground or during the daytime, it might be sick. Don't touch it, keep children and pets away, and call the Humane Society for Larimer County at 970-226-3647.

Learn More

For more information about bats, visit the Colorado Bat Society at www.coloradobats.org and the Colorado Division of Wildlife at www.wildlife.state.co.us. Click on *Wildlife Species and Species Profiles*.



Silver-haired bat (Lasionycteris noctvagens)