

Podcast  
"Bat Talk"  
USFS Alaska  
TRTL 4:08

NARRATOR: Cheryl Carrothers, who is the Regional Wildlife Program Manager for the Alaska Region of the U.S. Forest Service, is enthusiastic about bats. Let's listen to her discussion.

CHERYL\_CARROTHERS\_01

*Well, a lot of people think we don't have bats in Alaska, and we do. And here in Southeast, we have as many as five species, maybe more. The further north we get, the less diversity we have. But down here, four of our species are Myotis, and I think most people think of them as little brown bats, and our fifth species is a silver-haired bat.*

*All of these bats are associated with forests, and all of these bats are insectiferous, meaning they are eating bugs. None of them are blood-sucking bats.*

NARRATOR: No vampire bats?

CARROTHERS\_02

*None—no. But these insect bats, you think, okay, mosquitoes are an issue. Bats can eat, oh gosh, hundreds of insects in a night of foraging. They are eating spiders, too. And they've got a couple of different methods they use to catch their food. They're using echolocation. So, they're emitting sounds, and these sounds then bounce back off their prey so they can kind of hone in on them.*

NARRATOR: Is that like a sonar?

CARROTHERS\_03

*Kind of, like that, or like the whales use to figure out how they're going to feed or where their food sources are. And they're able in that way to hone in on their food, to distinguish between what's a tree and what's edible. And we've got them where they do what is called hawking, where they fly out in the air and hone in on their food. And that's what I think most people have seen them when they are doing that, when they see them up in the night sky.*

NARRATOR: Right, and look at the lights kind of, and see them flash by.

CARROTHERS\_04

*Yeah. And they also do what is called gleaning. And that's where some of their prey is sitting on leaves or up underneath the eaves on buildings. And the bats will go in then, and pluck. That's where they are getting the spiders and a lot of those insects that are on buildings or on the leaves and things.*

NARRATOR: So, where do they reside? What's their home?

CARROTHERS\_05

*I think historically they were probably associated with crevices on snags, you know the dead trees under the bark. Sometimes they are just under the outside of the trees. We've got bats here that roost in rock crevices, as well. And we even have some really unique habitats that are unusual, I guess, than other places where some of our hot springs have these big boulders up and over the warm water. And we have bats roosting there as well. But then bats are somewhat opportunistic. We have a lot of bats that are roosting in people's houses, up under their eaves, in the chimneys, little hidden places where they can be free from predators and have a little bit of warmth or protection from the elements.*

*These bats, you know, talking about little brown bats, and most of them, if we were going to look at their body size, it's about the size of your thumb, really small. Maybe a little bit bigger, maybe a little bit smaller. But typically maybe a wingspan of 7 or 8 inches, so real small bats.*

*Well, nationally and internationally, bats, because they are eating a lot of insects, they are eating a lot of crop pests. I know the West Nile virus, and there are quite a few diseases that are transmitted by things like mosquitoes and other flying insects. And bats, when we have good, healthy bat populations, they are eating those insects. Keeping away crop pests in the southern U.S. and other parts of the world.*

*And, when we start getting down into the more tropical regions, bats are important pollinators. Some of the bats have elongated noses and really long tongues. And they are pollinating saguaros and agaves and a lot more of those desert species as well as lot of our fruit crops.*

*Depending the kind of bat there are almost a thousand species of bats worldwide.*