

All About Bats

Read the information below, then test your knowledge with the bat crossword!

Welcome to the incredibly “batty” world of Jewel Cave! While visiting the cave you may meet a *Myotis*, the most common bat genus at Jewel Cave, flying around the historic entrance. But not to worry, the bats are actually an incredibly important member of the Black Hills ecosystem. In fact they represent seventeen percent of all mammal species in the Black Hills. Not only that, you might want to thank the next bat you see, because bats eat insects. A single bat can eat hundreds of mosquitoes per hour, keeping mosquitoes from sucking your blood (and perhaps preventing you from catching a blood-borne illness like West Nile Virus)! Bats also eat termites, cockroaches, flies, cucumber beetles, and other pests. Bats are nocturnal, hunting for food through the night and sleeping during the day. Try to imagine not only moving around in the dark, but also finding tiny flying food in the dark. In order to do so, bats send out high-pitched calls that bounce off objects and echo back to their ears. This incredible system is called echolocation.

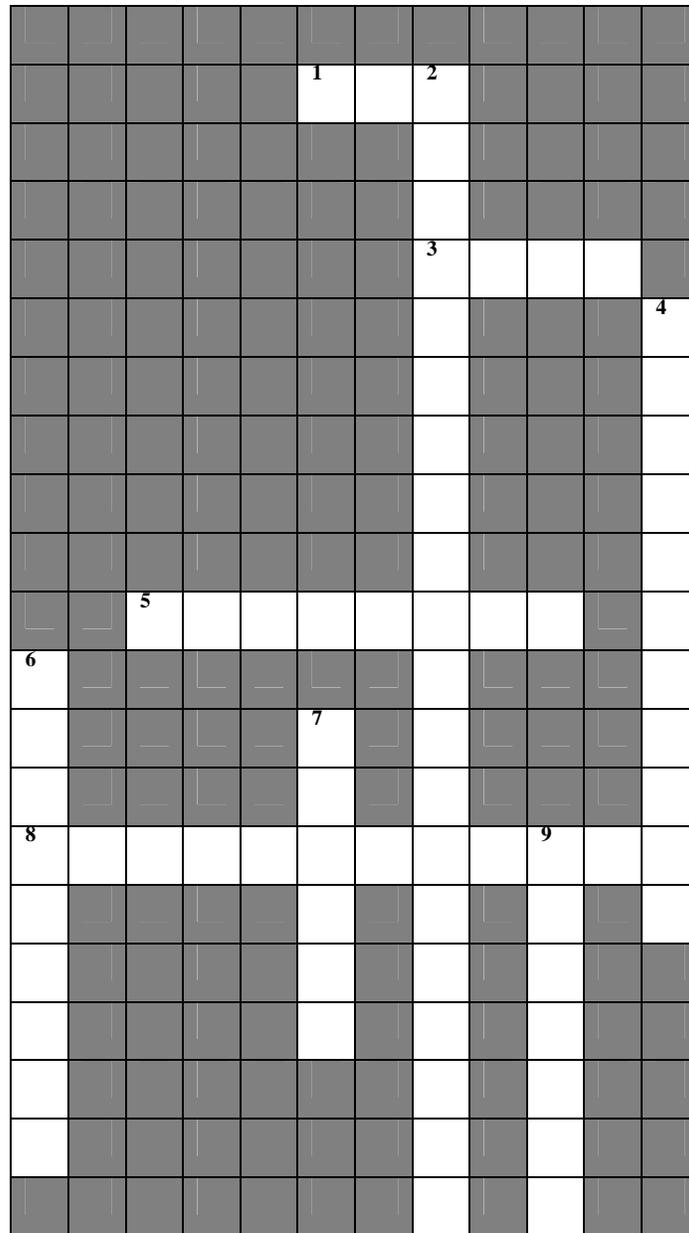
So what do bats do when winter hits and the cold kills off all of the insects? The hoary bat is a tree-roosting species that is found at Jewel Cave National Monument during the summer, and migrates south for the winter. Since Jewel Cave is 49 °F all year round, many of the nine species of bats found here go underground instead of migrating. Every year about one thousand bats spend the winter hibernating in Jewel Cave.

As bats and people live closer together, a new predator, the house cat, has become a problem for many bat species. A single cat outside Jewel Cave’s historic entrance once killed two hundred bats! Also, homeowners who try to evict bats during the summer can cause the female bat to abandon her young, and the young bats to starve to death. The best time to exclude bats is just before or just after the summer maternity season, using one-way devices that allow the bats to fly out, but not back in. Bats are quite vulnerable to predation, human disturbance, and shrinking habitat. Jewel Cave is a safe haven for many of these species, including the Townsend’s Big-Eared Bat. Jewel is one of the largest hibernacula in the world for this species.

People have lots of myths about bats that are wrong. Bats do not suck your blood or fly in your hair. They are not flying mice, and in fact are not rodents at all. Like many animals, bats can carry rabies; however dogs cause 99% of the rabies deaths worldwide. The best way to avoid rabies exposure is to avoid handling any unfamiliar animal.

Hopefully now that you know a little bit about bats, and how incredible they are, you too will go to bat for bats!

Bat Crossword



Across

1. What house pet is the enemy of bats?
3. _____ different species of bats live at Jewel Cave?
5. The _____ is a tree-roosting species, found at the monument only during the summer (2 words).
8. What do bats use to find their food?

Down

2. Jewel Cave is one of the world's largest hibernacula for which species? (4 words)
4. Approximately how many bats hibernate in Jewel Cave every year? (2 words)
6. Bats represent _____ percent of all mammal species in the Black Hills.
7. The most common genus of bat at Jewel Cave is the _____. (2 words)
9. By eating _____, bats help humans.

Bat Crossword Answer Key

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