

# Kid's KOrner

## Bats Can Be Beneficial

**True or False:** Bats are vicious, filthy and disease-ridden mammals that attack humans.

In fact, bats — the only flying mammals — are gentle, intelligent and frequently beneficial animals, according to this month's International Wildlife, the bimonthly publication of the National Wildlife Federation.

Sensational stories often portray bats as aggressive flying monsters that charge at people and transmit deadly diseases. Bats are actually meticulously clean and seldom spread disease or parasites to humans.

Despite exaggerated claims, fewer than one half of one percent of bats ever contract rabies, and only 10 people in the United States and Canada have died of disease from bats in more than 30 years — far less than the number of people killed by dog attacks.

Bats are also gentle and sociable when it comes to rearing their offspring. Most expectant bat mothers join nursery colonies where hundreds or even millions of them congregate to raise their young. While the mothers help each other with child-rearing chores, each individual recognizes and protects her own offspring. Fathers, in the meantime, cooperate by simply leaving the colony, reducing competition for limited food at the site. Among bat species that live in small groups, however, males may help with rearing the young, and bring food home to their mates.

Home for bats is usually a cave, though many also roost in animal burrows, termite and bird nests, unfurling banana leaves, bamboo stalks, or even spider webs. Several make their own homes by

cutting palm fronds or other leaves to make "tents."

Most bats migrate in the spring and fall to find suitable hibernating caves or warmer climates, often traveling up to a thousand miles one way. When researchers have deliberately moved bats hundreds of miles, they've discovered that bats find their way home.

Guiding bats through the air is a complex navigational system with sonar more sophisticated than man can comprehend. What we do know is that bats produce rapid pulses of sound at rates ranging from 20 to more than 500 per second, using sonar to perceive motion, distance, speed, trajectory, shape, texture and size — enabling them to detect and avoid obstacles as thin as a human hair or as small as a mosquito.

Because of their intricate sonar, bats are exceptionally long-lived and disease-resistant, making them extremely valuable in scientific research. Studies on bats, for example, have contributed to development of navigational aids for the blind, new vaccines, artificial insemination and birth control methods, drug testing, and studies of aging and space biology.

Bats are also major pollinators of 130 varieties of tropical plants, and the fruit-eating species are nature's most important seed-

dispersing animals. Included on the long list of fruits, nuts and derivatives from bat-adapted plants are peaches, bananas, avocados, cashews, mangoes and figs.

Despite their obvious value, bats are relentlessly persecuted, and many of their populations are extremely low. Scare stories about bats frighten people into attempting dangerous solutions to minor or nonexistent problems. When people fear bats in their homes, for instance, they may needlessly spray with toxic pesticides — threatening both humans and bats. Acting out of fear, people also close cave entrances — eliminating suitable habitat for as many as a million bats in one cave. Human disturbance can frighten young bat mothers who then allow their young to die.

Bats are legally protected in Europe and the Soviet Union, but in the United States, the only bats protected by the Endangered Species Act are gray, Indiana, Ozark big-eared, Hawaiian hoary, and Virginia big-eared.

Though bats are often protected under state game laws, those laws are seldom enforced, and survival of these valuable mammals depends upon prompt education of the public.

## Spurs N Burs 4-H Club

Spurs N Burrs 4-H Club met for an obstacle trail ride at the home of Clarence and Nancy Hottle.

First place winners were Christy

Wilson, Buffie Dunlap, Karen Fields and Carrie Stuart.

A birthday party for Kara Haas followed.

## Unscramble the Presidents



THERE WERE 6 PRESIDENTS OF THE UNITED STATES BORN IN THE MONTH OF OCTOBER... using the clues, unscramble the letters to find out their names.

- MS A DA  
2nd
- ESAHY  
19th
- RTHUAR  
21st
- LSEOVROET  
26th
- WEROISENHE  
34th
- ERRTCA  
39th

## COLOR THIS!

- |           |               |
|-----------|---------------|
| 1. BLACK  | 6. ORANGE     |
| 2. RED    | 7. GREEN      |
| 3. YELLOW | 8. LT. BROWN  |
| 4. BLUE   | 9. PEACH      |
| 5. BROWN  | 10. LT. GREEN |

**SOUTH CAROLINA WAS PART OF A REGION WHICH KING CHARLES I OF ENGLAND GRANTED TO SIR ROBERT HEATH IN 1629. AT FIRST IT WAS CALLED CAROLANA. CHARLES II CHANGED THE SPELLING OF THE NAME OF THE REGION TO CAROLINA IN 1663. IN 1860 IT WAS THE FIRST STATE TO SECEDE FROM THE UNION.**

