

Activity—Classifying Utah’s Bats

Standard
V

Objective
3

Connections

Standard V

Students will understand the physical characteristics of Utah’s wetlands, forests, and deserts and identify common organisms for each environment.

Objective 3

Use a simple scheme to classify Utah plants and animals.

Intended Learning Outcomes

1. Use science process and thinking skills.
4. Communicate effectively using science language and reasoning skills.

Background Information

There are 18 species of bats found in Utah. These nocturnal creatures are fascinating. They are the only major predators of night-flying insects and in Utah, that is all they eat. (In other areas bats also eat fruit or nectar. Some hunt small fish, lizards, frogs and mice. There is even a vampire bat that makes a small cut in their prey in order to lap up some blood.) The little brown bat, the most common specie in North America, can catch up to 600 mosquitoes in an hour.

During the day, bats find safe places to roost (or sleep), using the sharp claws on their feet to hang upside down. Utah’s bats roost in interesting places—behind rocks, under the bark or in the leaves and branches of trees, in caves, in attics, and under the roofs of buildings.

Scientists who study bats often identify them by giving them names that describe how they look. As students use the information on bats, have them be aware of these interesting names.

Invitation to Learn

Have students take a survey about bats. Each student will record short responses to questions such as: Do you like bats? Are bats helpful to humans? Are you afraid of bats? How many kinds of bats do you think live in Utah? What animal group do bats belong to?

Explain to students that the following activity will help them practice classification skills as they read and compare information on the bats that live in Utah.

Instructional Procedures

1. Using the cards made from the bat poster, have students work in groups to develop a classification system with bats. The information on the back of each card can be grouped in a variety

- of ways (by geographic location, size, habitat, food source, etc.).
2. Have each group arrange their cards on a large piece of poster paper and label their key.
 3. Students should share their keys with the class.
 4. Display the posters around the room.

Curriculum Integration

Math/Science—Create a brochure about bats that conveys information to inform people of the benefits of bats. (See sample)

Compare and contrast the size of Utah bats in a graphing activity.
Create different shaped bats using tangrams.

Possible Extensions/Adaptations

Investigate a service-learning project that will benefit bat populations and the scientists studying them. Create bat houses with community partners as part of the study. (Be sure students are aware of bat etiquette and safety.)

Assessment Suggestions

In a learning center, place materials for individuals to record the bat classification information in a key. Have students trade with one another, and attempt to classify the bats. If they can use the key successfully, they can continue sharing with others. If the key needs changes, help students work to make their key successful.

Additional Resources

Stellaluna by J. Cannon (Harcourt, Inc.), 1993
Bats of Utah by R. Hasneyager (Division of Wildlife Resources), 1980
Bats (Zoobooks), 1989
About Bats (Educator's Activity Book, Bat Conservation International), 1991

Homework and Family Connections

Have students take the survey about bats home and use with family members. Encourage them to share anything they learned about this unusual animal with their family.

Materials

- bat poster for classroom display
- Bat posters for student use in classification
- Create bat classification cards made using BLM poster (or assemble other pictures of bats)

BAT MYTHS

Bats are frightening to many people because they fly at night and swoop over people's heads. Some think that bats are dangerous because they can get rabies from them. Studies have shown that hardly any bats have rabies. You would be at higher risk getting rabies from a dog or cat.

Food

All bats in Utah are insects eaters. They feed on thousands of mosquitoes, moths, beetles and grasshoppers. The little brown bat, the most common bat in South America can catch up to 600 mosquitoes in an hour. Many tropical bats eat fruit or nectar. There are a few bats that feed on small fish, lizard, frogs and mice.

Description

Bats are a nocturnal (night active) mammal and the only one that can fly.



Utah's Nocturnal Friends