**Important Bat Facts**

Over 1200 kinds of bats in the world account for almost a quarter of all mammal species. Of the 46 American species, more than 50% are in severe decline or already listed as endangered.

For their size, bats are America’s longest lived mammals. Little brown bats can live up to 34 years.

Contrary to popular belief, bats are not blind, do not become entangled in hair, and seldom transmit disease to other animals and humans.

All mammals contract rabies; however, less than one-half of 1% of bats do, and these typically bite only in self-defense. Bats pose little threat if people simply do not handle them.

Bats are slow reproducers – they do not have litters. Most bats in Wisconsin have only one baby (pup) per year. A couple of species can have twins or triplets annually.

Without predators, insects would overwhelm the earth. Like birds, bats consume enormous quantities. One little brown bat can catch 1200 bugs in an hour, often two in a single second. A nursing mother eats more than her own body weight nightly – up to 4500 insects, including mosquitos.

Bats have lived in America since the dinosaurs, yet today they rank among the most endangered wildlife. Their loss threatens the balance of nature and human economies.

Just 150 big brown bats can eat enough cucumber beetles each summer to protect farmers from 33 million of these beetles’ rootworm larvae, pests that cost close to a billion dollars annually.

Tropical bats are key elements in the rain forest ecosystems that rely on bats to pollinate flowers and disperse seeds for countless shrubs, trees, and important agricultural crops such as mangos, cashews, dates, figs, balsa, sisal, and kapok. 450 economically important products are bat reliant.

Bat droppings (guano) in caves support whole ecosystems of unique organisms, including bacteria useful in detoxifying wastes, improving detergents, and producing gasohol and antibiotics.

**White Nose Syndrome** (WNS) is causing unprecedented mortality in cave hibernating bats in the US. 25 of 46 species are impacted. This fungal disease was first observed in New York in February 2006 and has killed more than 6 million bats. This non-native, cold-loving fungus disrupts the bats hibernation causing them to leave caves in the middle of winter and die.

The fungus is currently killing hibernating bat species in 29 states and 5 Canadian provinces. It continues to spread across the continent. Little brown bats, once a common bat in the area, are sustaining the largest number of deaths. Caves infected with WNS are displaying a 90-100% bat mortality- wiping out most of the cave bat populations.

Loss of bats in N. America will result in $3.7 to 53 billion per year in agricultural losses and increased pesticide usage. For Wisconsin, the annual cost is estimated to be $650 million to $1.5 billion. Insect-eating bats also play an important role in reducing risk of insect-transmitted diseases such as the West Nile virus.

Because so many bats have died so quickly, with no end in sight, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has called WNS the “worst wildlife health crisis in memory.”

How you can help:

http://www.batcon.org/index.php/what-we-do/white-nose-syndrome/subcategory/467.html