

Waugh Drive Bat Colony Houston, Texas



Location

The bats inhabit the Waugh Drive Bridge over Buffalo Bayou between Allen Parkway and Memorial Drive.

Viewing Tips

- The emergence is easily viewed from the sidewalk of the Waugh Drive Bridge or from the north bayou bank, east of the bridge in Buffalo Bayou Park. Please observe quietly and do NOT stand under the bridge, this disturbs the bats.
- The bats emerge around sunset each night, unless it is rainy or foggy, then the emergence is generally delayed.

The bats also prefer warm temperatures and typically do not emerge if the temperature is below 50°.

- A flashlight with red cellophane placed over the light to reduce glare may be helpful to spot flying bats.
- Volunteers from the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department and The Parks People are at the bridge the third Friday of each month to answer questions.

Frequently Asked Bat Questions

Q. What type of bats inhabit the bridge?

A. Mexican Free-Tailed Bats

Q. How many bats inhabit the bridge?

A. We are not sure. We estimate 250,000 but research is currently underway to find a better answer to this question.

Q. Do bats live in the bridge year around?

A. Yes, but it seems there are more bats in residence from March-September than in winter months.

Q. Why do bats live in this bridge, but not other bridges?

A. This bridge was designed with expansion joints that happen to be just the right size for this species of bat.

Q. What do bats eat?

A. Bats eat many things from insects to fruit and nectar. Mexican free-tailed bats eat insects and especially like moths.

Q. Are these bats dangerous?

A. Bats are gentle animals and will not harm you if they are left alone. NEVER try to touch or handle a bat as it may carry diseases.



Mexican Free-Tailed Bat Facts

- An individual typically lives to about 13 years old.
- Females give birth to a single baby, or pup, each spring.
- When not living in bridges, these bats make their homes in limestone caves and abandoned mines.
- The emergence of large bat colonies can be seen on Doppler weather radar!



Bat images courtesy of Bat Conservation International