



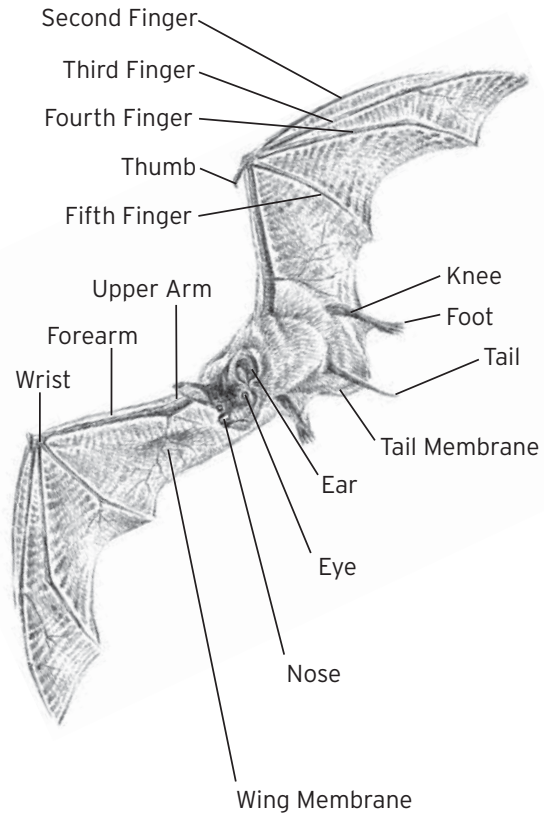
# BAT-WATCHING

## SITES OF TEXAS



Life's better outside.®

# BAT ANATOMY



## Welcome!

Texas happens to be the battiest state in the country. It is home to 32 of the 47 species of bats found in the United States. Not only does it hold the distinction of having the most kinds of bats, it also boasts the largest known bat colony in the world, Bracken Cave Preserve, near San Antonio, and the largest urban bat colony, Congress Avenue Bridge, in Austin. Visitors from around the world flock to Texas to enjoy public bat-viewing at several locations throughout the state.

This guide offers you a brief summary of what each site has to offer as well as directions and contact information. It also includes a list of the bat species currently known to occur within Texas at the end of this publication.

We encourage you to visit some of these amazing sites and experience the wonder of a Texas bat emergence!

## A Year in the Life of a Mexican Free-tailed Bat

Mexican free-tailed bats (also known as Brazilian free-tailed bats) are the most common bat found throughout Texas. In most parts of the state, Mexican free-tailed bats are migratory and spend the winters in caves in Mexico. They begin their migration to Texas in February and by early spring female bats form large maternity colonies where they will raise their young. There are only a small number of suitable sites for these large maternity colonies because the bats require high humidity and temperature levels. In June, mother bats give birth to one pup each. Male bats do not help in raising the young and form smaller “bachelor” colonies away from females.

Bats are mammals, so the pups are born live and weigh about 25 percent of their mother’s weight. They feed from their mother’s rich milk located

in mammary glands found under each of her wings.

The Mexican free-tailed bats’ milk is so rich that the pups grow fast and are ready to fly within four to five weeks of birth. It is estimated that baby Mexican free-tailed bats roost in densities of up to 500 pups per square foot. It is amazing to think that mother bats are able to find their own baby amongst thousands of pups by using their sense of smell and by knowing the sound of their pup’s call.

By early August, most pups are flying and foraging on their own. It is at this time of the summer when the most spectacular bat emergences often occur as the colony size might easily double. When the first cold fronts start pushing through in late October to mid-November, the Mexican free-tailed bats begin their migration to Mexico for the winter.

# Bat-Watching Etiquette

Viewing a bat emergence is one of the most memorable and exciting experiences in nature. The following guidelines are intended to help you enjoy watching bats without causing harm to them or yourself.

## When to arrive. What to expect.

Realize that a bat emergence is not a predictable event. No one can be sure when bats will come out or if they will even come out at all. Bad weather, cold temperatures, and other factors can cause bats to vary their emergence times. Go to the website for the bat viewing location you will be visiting to determine recent approximate emergence times.

## Keep your distance from the bats while they are emerging.

Most viewing sites have designated seating areas where you can view the bats comfortably out of the direct flight path of the bats. If viewing bats emerging from a bridge, avoid standing directly beneath the bridge and move to the side instead. Giving bats the space to fly minimizes disturbance to the bats and avoids any collisions.

## Do not touch!

If you happen to find a bat on the ground, DO NOT TOUCH IT! For the safety of the bats and yourself, give the bat space and avoid contact. The bat could be a youngster learning to fly or an ill bat. Wild animals may bite when threatened. Bats, like other mammals, can contract rabies, but the vast majority do not. Please never touch or handle a bat. Notify the site's manager or volunteer or call a local animal control office.

## Shhhh!

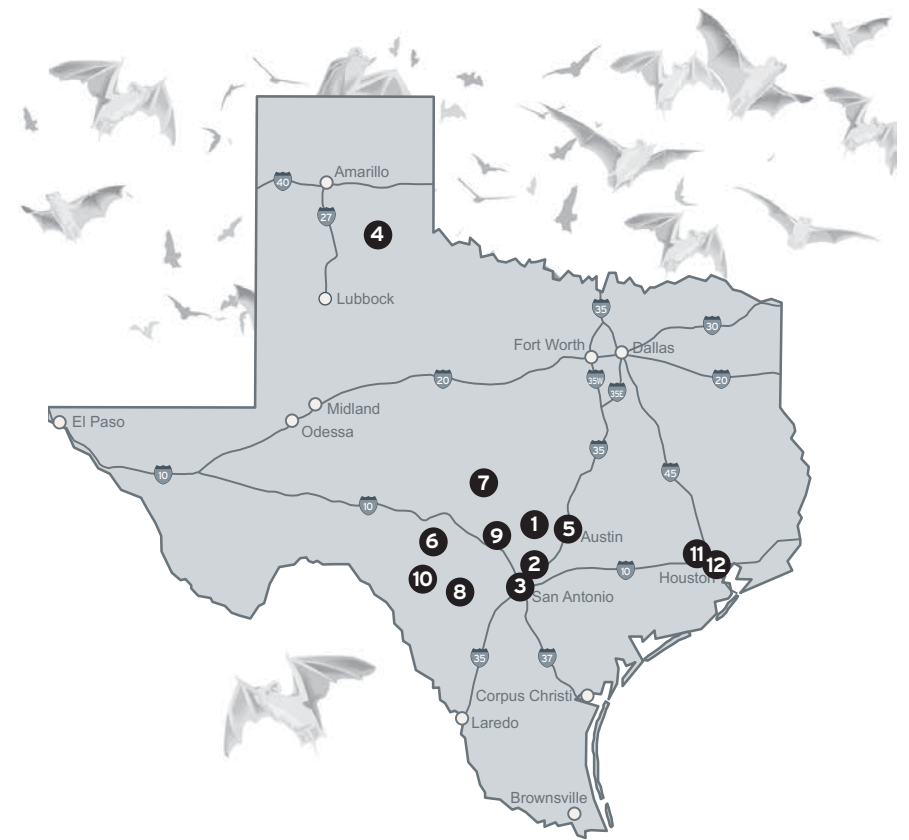
It is important to keep your voices low while viewing a bat flight. Loud noises can disturb the bats and cause them to alter their emergence behavior.

## No bright lights.

Please do not shine any type of light at the bats, including cellphone lights or the flash on your camera. This unexpected light disturbs the bats and may alter their emergence behavior and facilitate capture by predators.

## Do not bother the bats!

Do not throw any objects at flying or roosting bats. Do not poke bats. Bat roosts are very important sites for bats to raise their young and to rest when not foraging. Bats at these Texas sites are protected by state law.



## Sites to Visit

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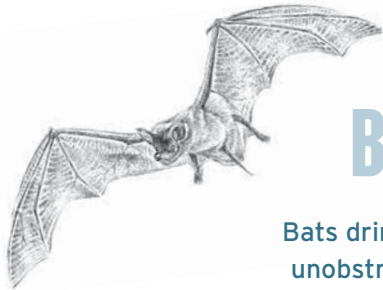


## HILL COUNTRY REGION

# Bamberger Ranch Preserve

(Privately Owned)

Always a conservationist, J. David Bamberger was inspired to build his own bat cave on the Bamberger Ranch after years of volunteering with Bat Conservation International's Bracken Cave (for more information, see the online article "How to Build a Bat Cave" from the *BATS* magazine Volume 15, Issue 4, Winter 1997 that chronicles the construction of the Chiroptorium). Completed in 1998, the Chiroptorium is designed to house 1 million Mexican free-tailed bats. In the summer of 2002, several hundred bats began using the cave and now the Chiroptorium is a maternity colony of over 200,000 Mexican free-tailed bats.



## BAT FACTS

Bats drink on the wing and need clean, unobstructed drinking water sources.

It's very important that you never touch a bat! Most bats do not have rabies, but avoiding a possible bite protects you AND them.

Bats are protected by the state of Texas in their natural habitats, including bridges.

### FEES

\$10 per person for bat flights.

\$15 per person for group tours of the ranch (20 person minimum fee)

### RESERVATIONS

Private ranch, not open to the public. Private tours can be scheduled in advance by contacting [www.bambergeranch.org](http://www.bambergeranch.org).

### HOURS

Schedule to be determined during summer months. It will be posted on the website once finalized.

### HANDICAPPED ACCESSIBLE

No

### OWNERSHIP

Private landowner

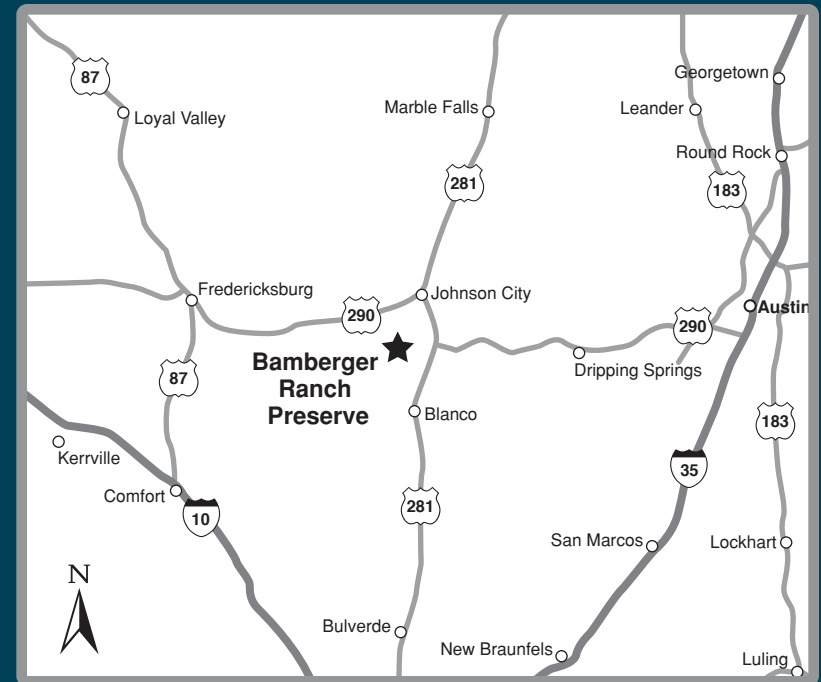
### CONTACT INFORMATION

(830) 868-2630

[www.bambergeranch.org](http://www.bambergeranch.org)

### DIRECTIONS

Call for directions









## HILL COUNTRY REGION

# Camden Street Bridge

San Antonio River Walk

The San Antonio River is home for many species of wildlife. Nestled under the I-35 Bridge where it crosses the San Antonio River near Camden Street, a colony of approximately 50,000 male Mexican free-tailed bats roost during the summer months. Located along the Museum Reach segment of the San Antonio River Walk, the expansion joint under the concrete bridge is the perfect home for these nocturnal mammals who thrive on tight, cozy, and warm spaces. The colony's close proximity to the water of the San Antonio River gives the bats an open area to glide through when they emerge for their nightly feedings of agricultural pests.

The Museum Reach segment of the River Walk, from Lexington Avenue north to Josephine Street, is approximately 1.3 miles and provides a hike and bike trail, public art installations by world-renowned artists, elegant water features, and access to restaurants and shops.

The San Antonio River Authority (SARA), in partnership with Bat Conservation International (BCI) and Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD), hosts annual "Bat Loco" events at the intersection of Camden and Newell streets to highlight the bat colony, educate the public about the importance of bats, and spread awareness of bat conservation. The annual "Bat Loco Bash" in August concludes the event series with live music, food trucks, educational booths, kids' activities, and, of course, the bats!



## BAT FACT

There are over 1,300 different kinds of bats found in the world.

### FEES

Free

### RESERVATIONS

None required

### HOURS

Bats can be viewed April through October at sunset

### HANDICAPPED ACCESSIBLE

Yes

### OWNERSHIP

Public

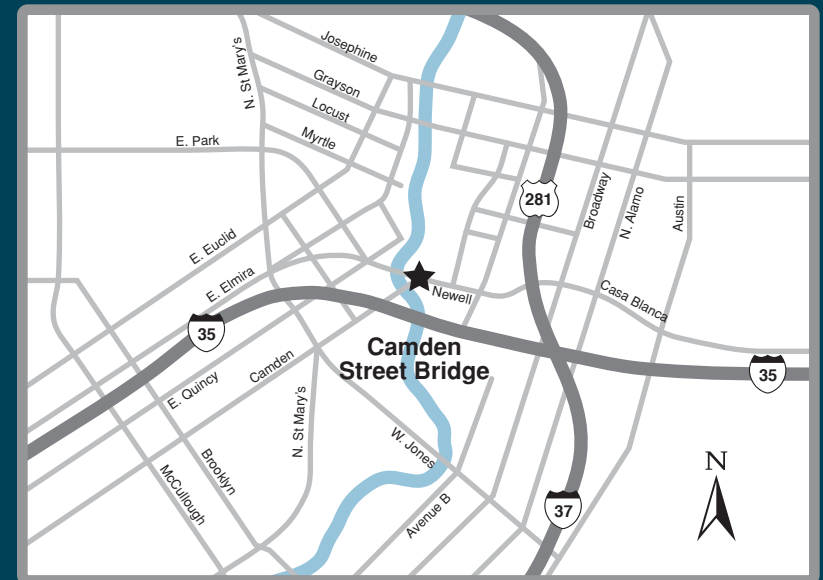
### CONTACT INFORMATION

San Antonio River Authority at (866) 345-7272.

For information on the Museum Reach, Bat Loco events and to download a trail brochure, visit [www.sara-tx.org](http://www.sara-tx.org).

### DIRECTIONS

Best viewing location is on river level at the intersection of Camden Street and Newell Avenue.





## PANHANDLE PLAINS REGION

# Clarity Tunnel

Caprock Canyons State Park and Trailway

Clarity Tunnel is an abandoned railroad tunnel, which is located on the Trailway of Caprock Canyons State Park. It was built in the late 1920s and was included in the National Register of Historic Places in 1977. Up to 500,000 Mexican free-tailed bats inhabit Clarity Tunnel from late April through mid-October. Although some pups have been found in the tunnel, the bat colony is not a true maternity colony. The Clarity Tunnel bat colony is most likely a pseudo-maternity colony, similar to the one at the Old Tunnel State Park. Railroad tunnels typically do not make suitable nurseries because they are open on both ends and the internal temperature and humidity levels are unstable. The highest numbers of bats recorded in Clarity Tunnel have been observed in early September, as they begin their fall migration to Mexico; however, reliable bat emergence flights occur throughout the summer.

The trip to Clarity Tunnel, along the Caprock Canyons Trailway, offers spectacular views of the rugged and beautiful breaks of the Llano Estacado.



## BAT FACT

Mexican free-tailed bats can fly over 60 miles round-trip in an evening, while foraging for insects. These bats are built for speed, with short fur and long, narrow wings, enabling them to fly an estimated 99 mph (160 kph) in horizontal flight! They have been observed feeding on insects at 10,000 feet – two miles high!

### FEES

\$10 per person

### RESERVATIONS

Reservations must be made in advance.

### HOURS

Tours are offered on Friday evenings, during the months of June through September. Tours begin 1.5 hours before sunset. Allow five hours for the entire tour.

### HANDICAPPED ACCESSIBLE

No

### OWNERSHIP

Texas Parks and Wildlife Department

### CONTACT INFORMATION

Park Interpreter at (806) 455-1140 or (806) 455-1492

### DIRECTIONS

Tours will originate at the Monk's Crossing Trailhead on the Caprock Canyons State Park and Trailway. To reach Monk's Crossing Trailhead from Caprock Canyons State Park or Quitaque, take FM 1065 south to FM 689. Turn right onto FM 689 and drive approximately two miles west to Monk's Crossing Trailhead. Parking at the trailhead is on the south (left) side of FM 689.





## HILL COUNTRY REGION

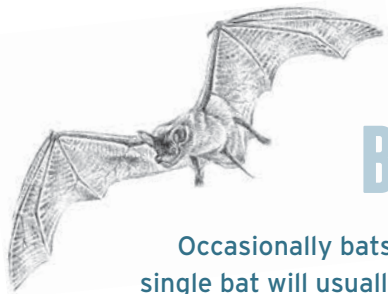
# Congress Avenue Bridge

Downtown Austin

The Ann W. Richards Congress Avenue Bridge, located in the heart of downtown Austin, hosts the largest urban bat colony in the world, estimated at 1.5 million bats. It is a maternity colony, and mother Mexican free-tailed bats raise an estimated 750,000 pups each year at the bridge.

Large numbers of bats began roosting in the Congress Avenue Bridge in the early 1980s, shortly after it was renovated. Few people understood how valuable the bats were, and many feared them. It took a lot of effort by Bat Conservation International and other bat-friendly folks to help turn the tide of public opinion. Today, Austin loves its bats, and this international tourist attraction brings 140,000 people and as much as \$10 million to Austin every year!

Watch from the lawn of the Austin American-Statesman's Bat Observation Area, which offers educational kiosks year-round and volunteer bat educators from Bat Conservation International on weekend evenings from May through September. You can also get nice views of the long columns of emerging bats from atop the bridge itself. Boat tours are available from Lone Star Riverboats and Capital Cruises.



## BAT FACT

Occasionally bats make their way into buildings, and a single bat will usually leave on its own with a little help from you. If a colony of bats moves into an attic or other space in a structure, there are humane ways to exclude them. Guidelines can be found on Bat Conservation International's website at [www.batcon.org/buildings](http://www.batcon.org/buildings).

### FEES

Viewing is free from the Austin American-Statesman's Bat Observation Area on the southeast side of Congress Avenue. However, there is a fee for parking in the lot near the viewing area. Go to [www.statesman.com/parking/](http://www.statesman.com/parking/) for details. Bat cruise fees range from \$5 to \$10.

### RESERVATIONS

Reservations not needed for free viewing. To reserve space on a bat cruise see contact information below.

### HOURS

Austin American-Statesman's Bat Observation Area is open year-round and BCI volunteer interpreters are available to answer questions on one or two weekend evenings from May through September. Please see [www.batcon.org/docent](http://www.batcon.org/docent) for details. Boat viewing seven nights a week from March through October.

### HANDICAPPED ACCESSIBLE

Yes

### OWNERSHIP

City of Austin

### CONTACT INFORMATION

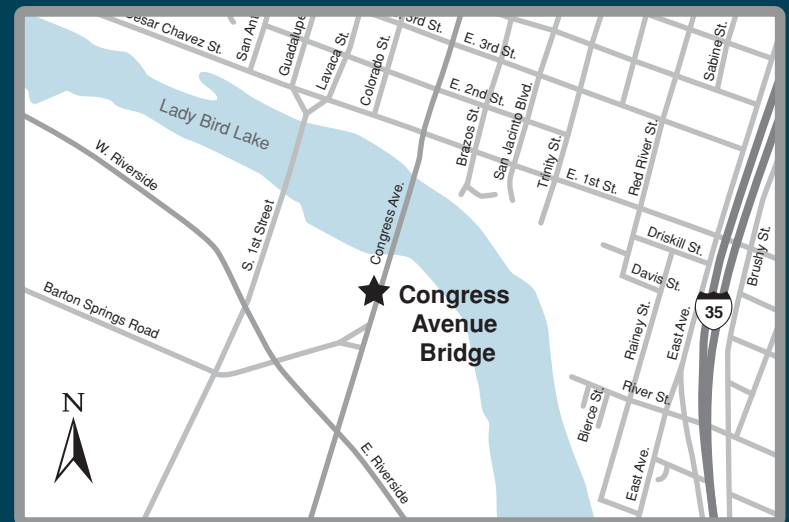
Bat Conservation International: [www.batcon.org/congress](http://www.batcon.org/congress) or (512) 327-9721

Lone Star Riverboat: [www.lonestarriverboat.com](http://www.lonestarriverboat.com) or (512) 327-1388

Capital Cruises: [www.capitalcruises.com](http://www.capitalcruises.com) or (512) 480-9264

### DIRECTIONS

From IH-35 in Austin where the Colorado River crosses IH-35, take Riverside Drive west 0.8 mile to Congress Avenue and turn north. The bat colony bridge spans Lady Bird Lake (the Colorado River).







## HILL COUNTRY REGION

# Devil's Sinkhole State Natural Area

The main attraction at Devil's Sinkhole SNA is the Devil's Sinkhole itself. The main cavern is circular, up to 60 feet wide at the opening, and 350 feet deep, making it the largest single-chambered cavern and the third deepest in the state. The Statue of Liberty could easily fit inside. About 3 million Mexican free-tailed bats inhabit the sinkhole seasonally, from May through October. These small, flying mammals put on quite a show in the evenings, forming a "tornado of bats" as they leave the cave to forage. About 3,000 to 4,000 cave swallows inhabit the cave at night while the bats are gone, and it is quite a sight to watch the cave swallows returning to the cave for the night while the bats are just beginning to emerge!

Since the bottom of the cave is below the water table, there are freshwater lakes around its perimeter. These lakes support two unique organisms: one, an endemic amphipod, a shrimp-like organism found nowhere else in the world, and the other, a rare aquatic isopod, which looks like a colorless pill bug. Also, the walls of the vertical shaft of the cave support a Mexican fern species found in few locations in the United States.



## BAT FACT

Mexican free-tailed bats are very important for keeping crop pests in check as they can eat up to two-thirds of their body weight in insects each night, especially while lactating and feeding young. With the large numbers of agricultural pests they eat, research has demonstrated that these bats can save farmers up to two applications of pesticides per year.

### FEES

\$12 for adults; \$10 for senior adults; \$6 for children 4 to 11; free for children under 4.

### RESERVATIONS

Reservations must be made in advance.

### HOURS

Visitors' Center is open five days a week, Wednesday through Sunday, year-round. Closed Christmas to New Year's Day.

### HANDICAPPED ACCESSIBLE

Yes

### OWNERSHIP

Texas Parks and Wildlife Department

### CONTACT INFORMATION

[www.tpwd.texas.gov/state-parks/devils-sinkhole](http://www.tpwd.texas.gov/state-parks/devils-sinkhole)  
Devil's Sinkhole Society at (830) 683-2287 (BATS)  
email: [devilsinkhole@swtexas.net](mailto:devilsinkhole@swtexas.net)

### DIRECTIONS

Devil's Sinkhole State Natural Area is located north of Rocksprings on U.S. 377. The Devil's Sinkhole Visitor's Center is located in Rocksprings at 101 N. Sweeten Street. All tours meet at the Visitor's Center, and visitors must call in advance.





## HILL COUNTRY REGION

# Eckert James River Bat Cave Preserve

This unique preserve is home to 4 million to 6 million Mexican free-tailed bats and one of the largest concentrations of warm-blooded animals in the world. The cave supports a maternity colony where females give birth to and raise their pups. Because this species roosts in such large numbers, colonies are vulnerable to disturbance and could be destroyed by a single destructive act. Additionally, the population recovery rate for a colony of Mexican free-tailed bats is slow because females give birth to only one pup each year.

Richard Phillip Eckert and Virginia Eckert Garrett donated the cave to The Nature Conservancy in honor of their father, Lee Eckert, and grandfather, W. Phillip Eckert. The Eckert family acquired the property in 1907 when W. Phillip purchased the ranch on which the cave is located. In the early 1900s, W. Phillip mined the bat guano in the cave and sold it to local farmers for crop fertilizer. W. Phillip's son, Lee Eckert, continued his father's legacy of bat conservation and guano mining and left the site to his wife and children when he passed away in 1967. This generation of Eckerts wanted to ensure permanent protection of the bats, so in 1990, they donated the cave to The Nature Conservancy on condition that the land around the cave remain open to the public for enjoyment and education, as it had been for more than 100 years.



## BAT FACT

Although bats can see quite well they also use echolocation or bio-sonar. The bats send out ultrasonic pulses from their nose or mouth. These sounds bounce off surrounding objects and back to a bat's ears helping it to navigate and find food.

### FEES

\$5 per person; free for children 5 and under.

### RESERVATIONS

Reservations not taken, except special group reservations.

### HOURS

Thursday through Sunday from 6 p.m. to 9 p.m., mid-May to early October.

### HANDICAPPED ACCESSIBLE

No; however prior arrangements can be made for help in getting access.

### OWNERSHIP

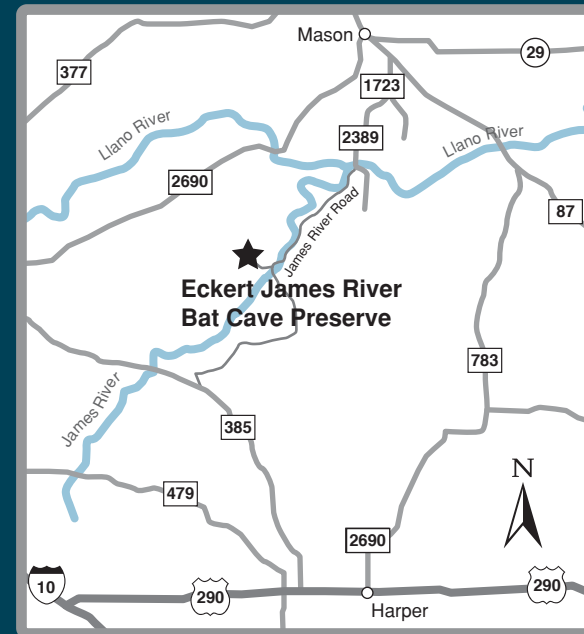
The Nature Conservancy of Texas

### CONTACT INFORMATION

Information Line (325) 347-5970 or visit [www.nature.org/ourinitiatives/regions/northamerica/unitedstates/texas/placesweprotect/eckert-james-river-bat-cave-preserve.xml](http://www.nature.org/ourinitiatives/regions/northamerica/unitedstates/texas/placesweprotect/eckert-james-river-bat-cave-preserve.xml)

### DIRECTIONS

From the intersection of TX 29 and US 87 in Mason, go south on US 87 for 1.2 miles to the intersection with FM 1723. Go south on FM 1723 for 2.3 miles to FM 2389. Take a right onto FM 2389 for 4.8 miles to James River Road. You will cross two bridges over the Llano River just before reaching James River Road. Continue on James River Road for 8.2 miles to the Eckert James River Bat Cave Preserve.



Note: just before reaching the preserve, you must cross the James River in your vehicle. River levels can be as low as a few inches in dry conditions and higher during wet seasons.



## HILL COUNTRY REGION

# Frio Bat Cave

(Privately Owned)

View up to 10 million Mexican free-tailed bats, one of the largest colonies in Texas, as they make their ascent into the evening sky. This cave also provides the necessary elements mother bats need to give birth to and raise their pups each year. Hike to the top of the hill to witness one of nature's most incredible spectacles. Check the sky for merlin, zone-tailed hawk, peregrine falcon, and red-tailed hawk, which hover just behind the crest of the hill to hunt the exiting bats. Around the cave you will see cave swallow, canyon wren, and rock wren.



## BAT FACTS

Some bats are important pollinators and seed dispersers.

Many of our everyday products, such as tequila, wild bananas, balsa wood, and allspice to name a few, come from bat pollinator-dependent plants.

One of our Texas bats – the pallid bat – feeds on centipedes and scorpions crawling on the desert floor, and it is immune to their venom!

### FEES

Check website or call for current fees.

### RESERVATIONS

Reservations must be made in advance.

### HOURS

Mid-March through September

### HANDICAPPED ACCESSIBLE

Yes

### OWNERSHIP

Private landowner

### CONTACT INFORMATION

Bain Walker and Lee Haile of Frio Bat Flight Tours; (888) 502-9387  
[www.friobatflight.com](http://www.friobatflight.com)

### DIRECTIONS

Call for directions





## HILL COUNTRY REGION

# Old Tunnel State Park

Old Tunnel State Park is home to up to 3 million Mexican free-tailed bats and 1,000 to 3,000 cave myotis bats from May to October. This 920-foot, abandoned Fredericksburg and Northern Railway railroad tunnel was purchased by Texas Parks and Wildlife Department for the specific purpose of protection and management of the bats. The bat colony at Old Tunnel State Park is considered a pseudo-maternity colony. While pregnant and lactating females use the tunnel, pups are not born in the tunnel but in nearby caves or bridges with more stable temperature and humidity levels. Because of this, the size of the colony fluctuates greatly throughout the season. In June, the population of bats can be smaller, after the females leave to give birth. However, by early August, females and juveniles will return to Old Tunnel and the colony size will continue to increase through mid-August. The largest population of bats can be seen during the months of August and September. The bats will usually begin migrating back to Mexico in late October.

The state park also offers a 1.5-mile nature trail through woodlands of live oak, escarpment black cherry, black walnut, hackberry, and Ashe juniper. Birds along the trail include yellow-billed cuckoo, Carolina wren, Carolina chickadee, and painted bunting. Several species of raptors can also be seen soaring over the adjacent canyon.



## BAT FACT

Bats are incredibly long-lived for their size, with the oldest confirmed insectivorous bat living 41 years!

### FEES

Upper viewing area is free. Lower viewing area is only open Thursday through Sunday evenings. The fee is \$5 per person regardless of age. Children age 3 and under are not allowed at the lower viewing area.

### RESERVATIONS

Reservations not taken, except for special group tours on Monday through Wednesday evenings. To schedule a group tour, please email [old.tunnel@tpwd.texas.gov](mailto:old.tunnel@tpwd.texas.gov).

### HOURS

Open year-round from sunrise to 5 p.m.; from May through October, upper viewing area open seven nights a week and lower viewing area only open Thursday through Sunday evenings.

### HANDICAPPED ACCESSIBLE

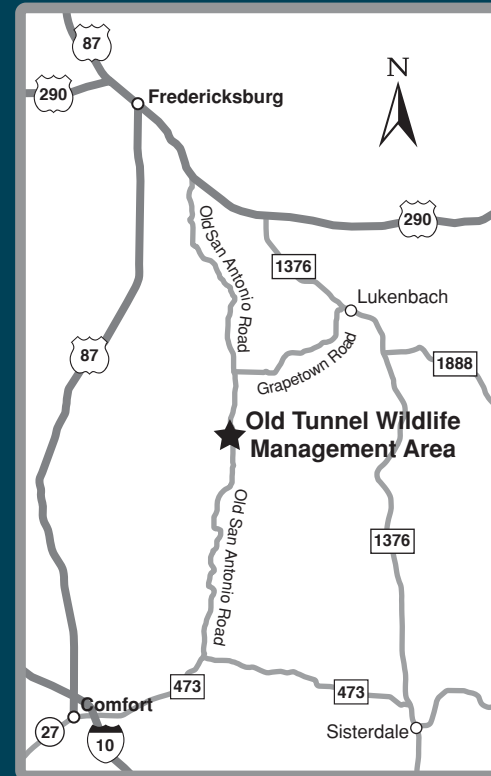
Yes

### OWNERSHIP

Texas Parks and Wildlife Department

### CONTACT INFORMATION

Old Tunnel Information Line (866) 978-BATS (2287)  
[www.tpwd.texas.gov/state-parks/old-tunnel](http://www.tpwd.texas.gov/state-parks/old-tunnel)



### DIRECTIONS

From Fredericksburg, take US 290 east to Old San Antonio Road (OSR), about 0.5 mile east of the Fredericksburg city limits. Turn right on OSR and drive 10.5 miles to the parking lot at Old Tunnel State Park, which will be on the left. From IH-10 in Comfort, take Exit #523 (Hwy. 87 North). Turn south, heading into the town of Comfort. Go 0.5 mile to the stop light (look for sign with "Old Tunnel State Park"), and turn left at the stop light onto FM 473. Stay on FM 473, which will take you back underneath IH-10, for 5 miles. When FM 473 makes a right turn to Sisterdale, go straight ahead on the Old #9 Highway for 8 more miles. Old Tunnel State Park will be on the right at the top of a hill.



## HILL COUNTRY REGION

# Stuart Bat Cave

Kickapoo Cavern State Park

Stuart Bat Cave is a spring-summer home for about 1 million Mexican free-tailed bats. Bats are here from mid-February to as late as mid-October. Bat flights are often spectacular. Group tours are available.

This 6,368-acre site is a mosaic of two major physiographic regions: the Edwards Plateau and the Tamaulipan Thorn-scrub. Ashe juniper and pinyon and live oak predominate the tree canopy throughout the park. The canyons contain Texas persimmon, shin oak, agarita, and evergreen sumac. Steep limestone canyons provide rich and varied habitat for a variety of wildlife. Blue-gray gnatcatcher, bushtit, verdin, varied bunting, Montezuma quail, several species of vireos, including the endangered black-capped vireo, and golden-cheeked warbler occur here. Mammals include white-tailed deer, raccoon, ringtail, gray fox, rock squirrel, and porcupine. Uncommon species of reptiles and amphibians include barking frog, mottled rock rattlesnake, and Texas alligator lizard.

Kickapoo Cavern, approximately 0.25 mile in length, boasts some impressive formations. A wild cave tour is available Saturdays only by advance reservation.



## BAT FACT

Bats are adapted for hanging upside down. Their hind limbs are rotated 180 degrees so that their knees face backwards. They hang by their legs and use the claws on their toes to support their weight. Locking tendons in the toes allow the bats to hang without expending energy.

### FEES

\$3 park entry fee for ages 13 and up; 12 and under are free. Limited overnight camping facilities are available during operating hours. Call park or visit park website for details.

### RESERVATIONS

Reservations are not required for bat-flight viewing. Groups may want to consider making advance arrangements.

### HOURS

The park is open four days a week, 8 a.m. Friday through 5 p.m. on Monday, year-round. For entry on other days, call park to make arrangements.

### HANDICAPPED ACCESSIBLE

Yes

### OWNERSHIP

Texas Parks and Wildlife Department

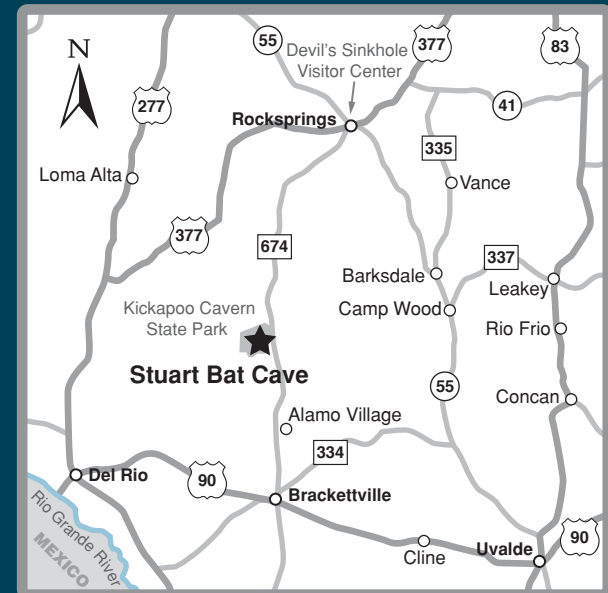
### CONTACT INFORMATION

(830) 563-2342

[www.tpwd.texas.gov/state-parks/kickapoo-cavern](http://www.tpwd.texas.gov/state-parks/kickapoo-cavern)

### DIRECTIONS

Kickapoo Cavern State Park is located approximately 22 miles north of Brackettville on FM 674.







## GULF COAST REGION

# Watonga Boulevard Bridge – White Oak Bayou Greenway Trail

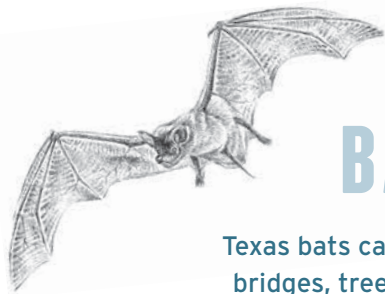
(Northwest Houston)

Approximately 100,000 Mexican free-tailed bats call the Watonga Boulevard bridge along White Oak Bayou Greenway home. The bridge is located 11 miles northwest of Downtown Houston at 4721 Watonga Boulevard.

Upon emerging at sunset, the bats usually fly along White Oak Bayou before disappearing into the night. Visitors can view the bats while sitting on park benches or on the grassy greenspace along the bayou. An information kiosk on the west side of the bayou provides an added educational experience for visitors. While planning your visit, remember to look at the weather forecast. Bats usually do not emerge when sunset temperatures hover near 50 degrees or below.

White Oak Bayou Greenway can be accessed via the hike and bike trail that runs through it and is ADA accessible.

Parking is provided on Watonga Boulevard heading south and across from De Milo Drive.



## BAT FACTS

Texas bats can be found in caves, cliff crevices, bridges, tree foliage, snags, hollow trees, and increasingly, as their habitat is lost, in buildings.

Contrary to old myths, bats are not blind, will not get tangled in your hair, and are not flying rodents.

### FEES

Free viewing available from viewing platform and park grounds.

### RESERVATIONS

Reservations are not needed for this location.

### HOURS

Open year-round for viewing from the platform and park grounds.

### HANDICAPPED ACCESSIBLE

Yes. Bats can be viewed from the viewing platform near the bridge. Trail access is from the trail entrance points. On the southeast side, the trail access point is at TC Jester and West 43rd Street. On the northwest side, the trail access point is at Pinemont Drive.

### OWNERSHIP

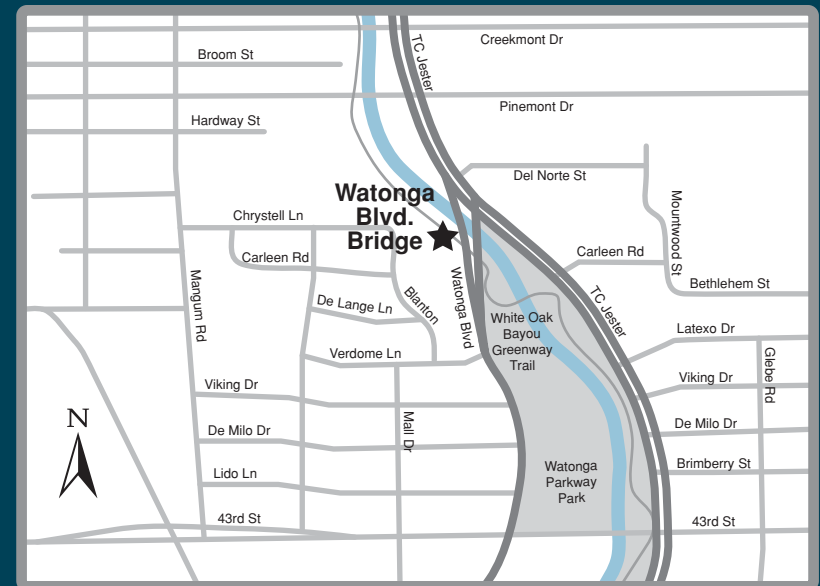
City of Houston

### CONTACT INFORMATION

General Information: City of Houston Parks and Recreation, (832) 395-1000, [www.houstontx.gov/parks/](http://www.houstontx.gov/parks/) Bayou Greenways Trails, (713) 942-8500, [www.houstonparksboard.org](http://www.houstonparksboard.org)

### DIRECTIONS

4721 Watonga Boulevard





## GULF COAST REGION

# Waugh Drive Bridge

(Downtown Houston)

Nestled among lush green vegetation of Buffalo Bayou Park, Waugh Drive bridge rests over Buffalo Bayou, less than two miles west of Downtown Houston. The bat flights are amazing, winding along the bayou or through the skyscrapers across downtown.

An estimated 250,000 Mexican free-tailed bats call the bridge home. The bat population fluctuates through the year, with the peak in the summer and early fall. A large population of bats continues to reside in the bridge through the winter months, resulting in awesome emergences on warm winter evenings.

Upon emerging at sunset, the bats usually fly east along the bayou before dispersing. The best bat viewing locations are:

- 1) the viewing platform at the southeast corner of the bayou bank, next to the bridge (along Allen Parkway);
- 2) the northeast bank of the bayou, near the bridge (near Memorial Drive); and
- 3) on the east rail sidewalk of the bridge itself, looking directly down into the bayou channel.

The best emergences happen on warm nights any month of the year. However, the bats usually remain inside the bridge crevices and do not emerge when sunset temperatures are near 50 degrees or below, or when it is raining.

“Bat Chats” occur at the bridge on Friday nights from March through October. Please arrive 30 minutes before sunset to hear the batty Q & A presentation. Houston Area Bat Team members will be on-hand to answer questions about bats in general and about the Waugh Drive colony. Buffalo Bayou Partnership offers boat trips on the bayou, culminating in watching the bat flight from below.

## FEES

Viewing is free from the platform, sidewalk or bridge. Waugh Bat Colony Boat Tours require a reservation and fee. Call Buffalo Bayou Partnership for current information.

## RESERVATIONS

No reservations are needed to view the bats from Buffalo Bayou Park. To reserve seats on the Waugh Bat Colony Boat Tours, please contact Buffalo Bayou Partnership, <http://buffalobayou.org/boat-tours/>.

## HOURS

Open year-round for viewing from platform and sidewalk, although winter viewing can be spotty depending on weather/temperature. Boat tours available spring through fall only.

## HANDICAPPED ACCESSIBLE

Yes. Bats can be easily viewed from the viewing platform and the sidewalk.

## OWNERSHIP

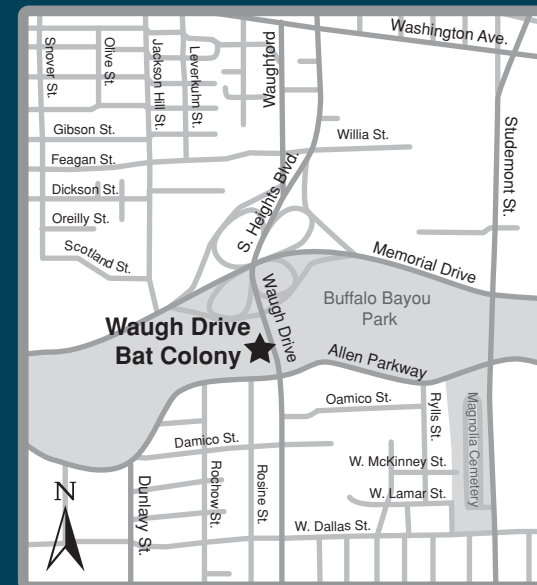
City of Houston; Buffalo Bayou Park is managed by Buffalo Bayou Partnership.

## CONTACT INFORMATION

City of Houston Parks and Recreation, (832) 395-7000, [www.houstontx.gov/parks/](http://www.houstontx.gov/parks/)  
Waugh Bat Colony Boat Tour reservation, Buffalo Bayou Partnership, (713) 752-0314, [buffalobayou.org/boat-tours/](http://buffalobayou.org/boat-tours/)  
General bat information, contact TPWD Urban Wildlife Program, (281) 456-7029

## DIRECTIONS

From Interstate 10, west of Downtown Houston, take the Heights Boulevard exit. Go south on Heights Boulevard, cross the railroad tracks and Washington Avenue. Continue south. The road name changes to Waugh Drive. Memorial Drive will be reached next, then Allen Parkway. The bridge is located between Memorial Drive and Allen Parkway. Parking is located along Allen Parkway, in Spott's Park, 401 S. Heights Boulevard, and at Lost Lake Visitor Center, 3422 Allen Parkway.



## List of 32 Bat Species Known to Occur in Texas

Big brown bat (*Eptesicus fuscus*)  
Big free-tailed bat (*Nyctinomops macrotis*)  
Mexican (Brazilian) free-tailed bat (*Tadarida brasiliensis*)  
California myotis (*Myotis californicus*)  
Cave myotis (*Myotis velifer*)  
American perimyotis (aka Tri-colored bat; formerly Eastern pipistrelle)  
(*Perimyotis subflavus*)  
Eastern red bat (*Lasiurus borealis*)  
Evening bat (*Nycticeius humeralis*)  
Fringed myotis (*Myotis thysanodes*)  
Ghost-faced bat (*Mormoops megalophylla*)  
Hoary bat (*Lasiurus cinereus*)  
Long-legged myotis (*Myotis volans*)  
Mexican long-nosed bat (*Leptonycteris nivalis*)  
Mexican long-tongued bat (*Choeronycteris mexicana*)  
Northern long-eared myotis (*Myotis septentrionalis*)  
Northern yellow bat (*Lasiurus intermedius*)  
Pallid bat (*Antrozous pallidus*)  
Pocketed free-tailed bat (*Nyctinomops femorosaccus*)  
Rafinesque's big-eared bat (*Corynorhinus rafinesquii*)  
Seminole bat (*Lasiurus seminolus*)  
Silver-haired bat (*Lasionycteris noctivagans*)  
Southeastern myotis (*Myotis austroriparius*)  
Southern yellow bat (*Lasiurus ega*)  
Southwestern little brown myotis (aka Arizona myotis) (*Myotis occultus*)  
Spotted bat (*Euderma maculatum*)  
Townsend's big-eared bat (*Corynorhinus townsendii*)  
Western mastiff bat (aka Greater bonneted bat) (*Eumops perotis*)  
American parastrelle (aka Canyon bat; formerly Western pipistrelle)  
(*Parastrellus hesperus*)  
Western red bat (*Lasiurus blossevillii*)  
Western small-footed myotis (*Myotis ciliolabrum*)  
Western yellow bat (*Lasiurus xanthinus*)  
Yuma myotis (*Myotis yumanensis*)

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Ammerman, L. K., C. L. Hice, and D. J. Schmidly. Bats of Texas.  
Texas A&M University Press, College Station, 2012.



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