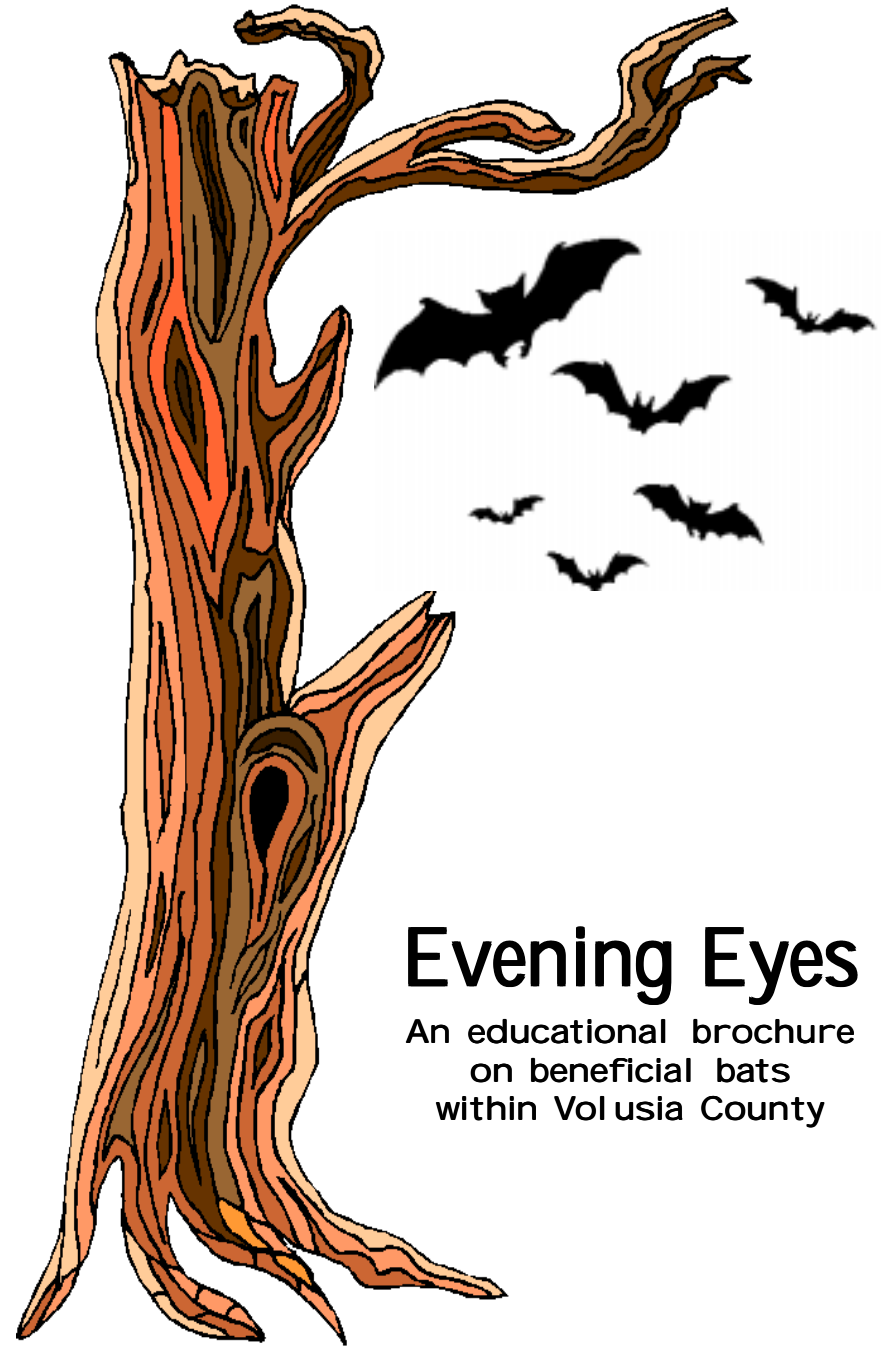




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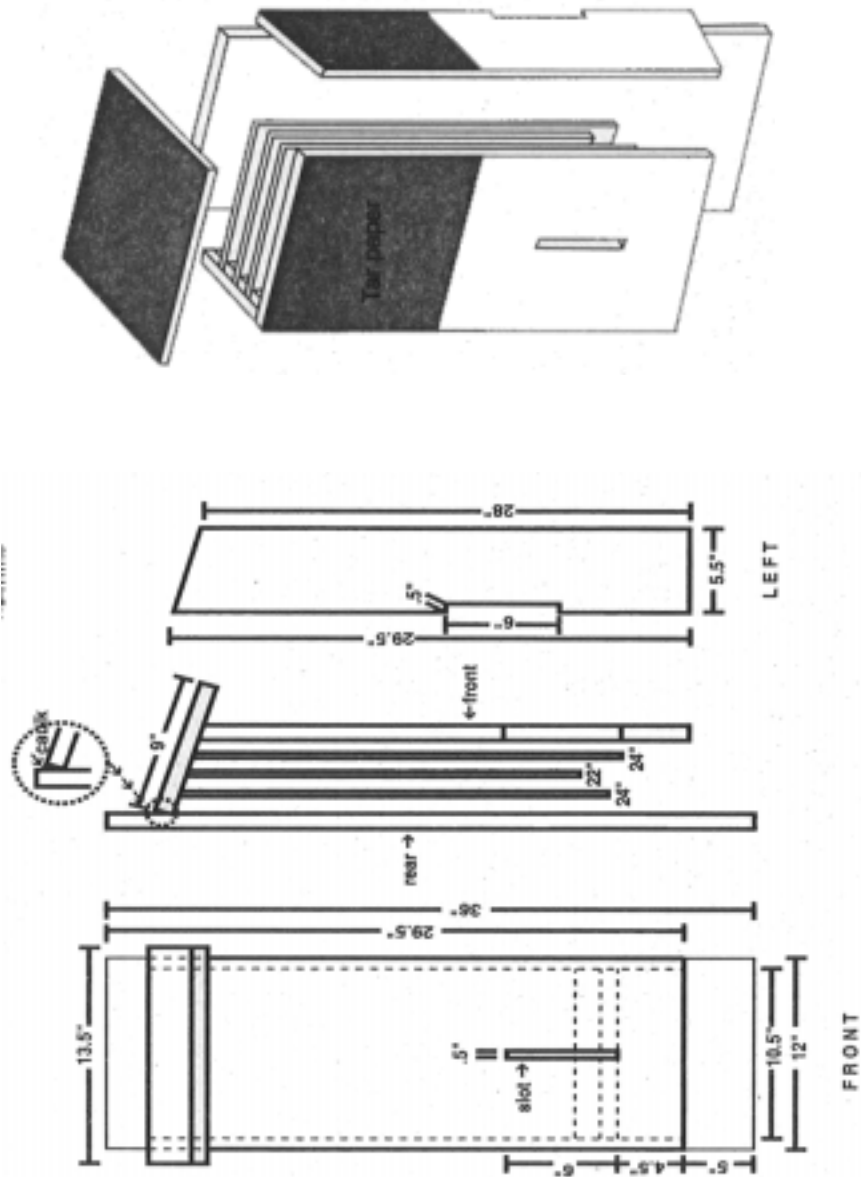


Evening Eyes

An educational brochure
on beneficial bats
within Volusia County

Bat Biology

Bats are part of the Chiroptera family which means “hand wing”. Bats that live together as a group is known as a colony. Their life expectancy is approximately thirty years. Bats, like humans are mammals. Females usually give birth to one young or pup per year. Bats are nocturnal, active at night, resting during the day. Bats actually have excellent eyesight, and are never “Blind as a bat”! To find their way around in the dark, they use echolocation or built in sonar. Bats can weigh as little as two grams or as much as two pounds. Bats are also the only mammals that can fly. Similiar to humans, bats possess 10 fingers. You might not think that bats are clean although, they are very clean and tend to groom themselves regularly.



All eastern bats found only in the United States possess a specialized diet of only insects. Bats can eat one half of their body weight in one night. An average bat will consume more than 3000 insects a night! The most favorable diet consists of moths, and soft-shelled beetles such as lightening bugs. During the winter seasons when insects are rare, bats hibernate. Instead of building a nest, bats will tend to hang in various safe locations.

Bats are very beneficial to the environment. Even in your residential neighborhoods, bats are everywhere. We owe it to the bats to control the insect population. Some bats even help with pollination. Therefore, the next time you observe a bat, don't be scared, be amazed!

Attracting Bats



Most bats in Florida prefer to roost in trees during the warm summers and tree hollows for the cool winters. As hollow trees become scarce, bat boxes become more important to the bat's survival. This is especially true for the months of April to August when the females are searching for quiet, safe places to give birth and raise their young.

A bat box can be installed at any time although, late winter and early spring is the best time. This provides the bats a chance to find the house and decide if it is suitable for them. Make sure you hang the box at least 10 feet off the ground, in a spot where the morning sun shines. Approximately 100 -150 bats can live in an average bat box if designed appropriately.



Building a Bat House

1. Cut all pieces to size, out of old wood if possible.
2. Space shallow saw kerfs or knife gouges about 1" apart on the plywood baffles to give the bats something to cling to. Plastic (but not metal) screen material may be stapled on instead.
3. Screw 3/4" x 1" spacer strips on side panels to make slots for the baffles.
4. Attach front panel to sides. Add roof. Glue baffle edges and drop into slots. Attach back panel.
5. Darken with waterbase stain and tack or staple tar paper to roof and top third of the box to increase heat absorption.

