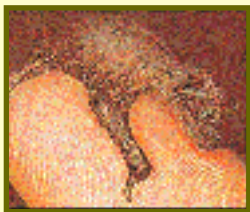


Ahhh, a baby bat...



If you thought the bat in front of you is a baby bat you'd be wrong. It is a full-grown adult Pipistrelle bat (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus*). Pipistrelles are the smallest of Britain's bats but are excellent hunters and agile fliers.

No larger than a 5p piece, this one day old Pipistrelle clings to a man's finger.

Blind as a Bat

Bats are not blind but they don't use their eyes to catch their food. They have adapted to exploit the hunting times of dusk and dawn when other predators aren't around by using their mouths, noses and ears.



Like sounding the deep - a bat reads the echoes from nearby

Bloodsucking Little Vampires

Bats are notoriously associated with drinking blood but only one species of bat, the Vampire Bat, actually does. The Vampire Bat lives in Central and South America and will only drink about two tablespoons of blood in one feeding - so we don't have to worry in Portsmouth! Another fear is that bats carry rabies, but there is no rabies in European bats.

To hunt without using their eyes, bats have developed a unique way of locating their prey - a brilliant system called **echolocation**. As the name suggests, echolocation finds prey and obstacles using echoes. The bat squeaks very loudly, at a pitch too high for the human ear, and waits until it hears the sound bouncing back from the insect it is trying to catch or the object it is trying to avoid. From the time it takes for the sound to bounce back the bat can work out where its prey is and pounce on it. All this happens in a matter of milliseconds and all while the bat is in flight. This means that bats have a fantastic ability to measure time and have astounding reflexes.



The Vampire Bat
Desmodus rotundus