

Bats of the Chihuahuan Desert

Family Sense

Tell students: Did you know that a mother bat can find her babies in huge colonies of bats up to 20 million? Mothers and pups recognize each other's unique voices at least three feet away and can move toward one another despite the incredible confusion of calls coming from thousands of bats within a single colony.

See Resource File 1-All About Bats for the information on adaptations of a mother bat's sense of smell and how she uses smell and hearing to locate her offspring.

Ask students: What do you think it might feel like to live in a bat nursery?

Materials Needed:

- Butcher paper
- Scissors
- Cotton balls
- Glue
- Orange, mint, vanilla, banana, lemon, and coconut extract (or other scents as available)
- Index cards
- envelopes

Activity Set Up –

1. Cut a 1'x1' piece of butcher paper. Glue 500 cotton balls to the butcher paper to demonstrate the density of bat babies in a nursery.
2. Randomly drop scented extract on some of the 500 cotton balls.

Activity Procedure –

1. Each student is an 'adult' in this activity. Explain to the students that they will be assigned a different scent (smell) and that it is important not to tell other students what their assigned scent is. Their job will be to find their 'pup'—cotton ball that has the same smell as them. Ideally each scented pup has an assigned adult. For larger classes, you could break the students up into rotations and let a small group of them play the first round, then another group the second round, and so forth.
2. Provide students with an envelope that contains an index card listing one scent (smell) and a cotton ball with that smell. This will be their assigned smell.
3. Allow student to one at a time come up to the demonstrated nursery.
4. Have students smell the cotton balls and find their matching smell.

Follow up discussion: How difficult or easy was it to find your 'pup?'