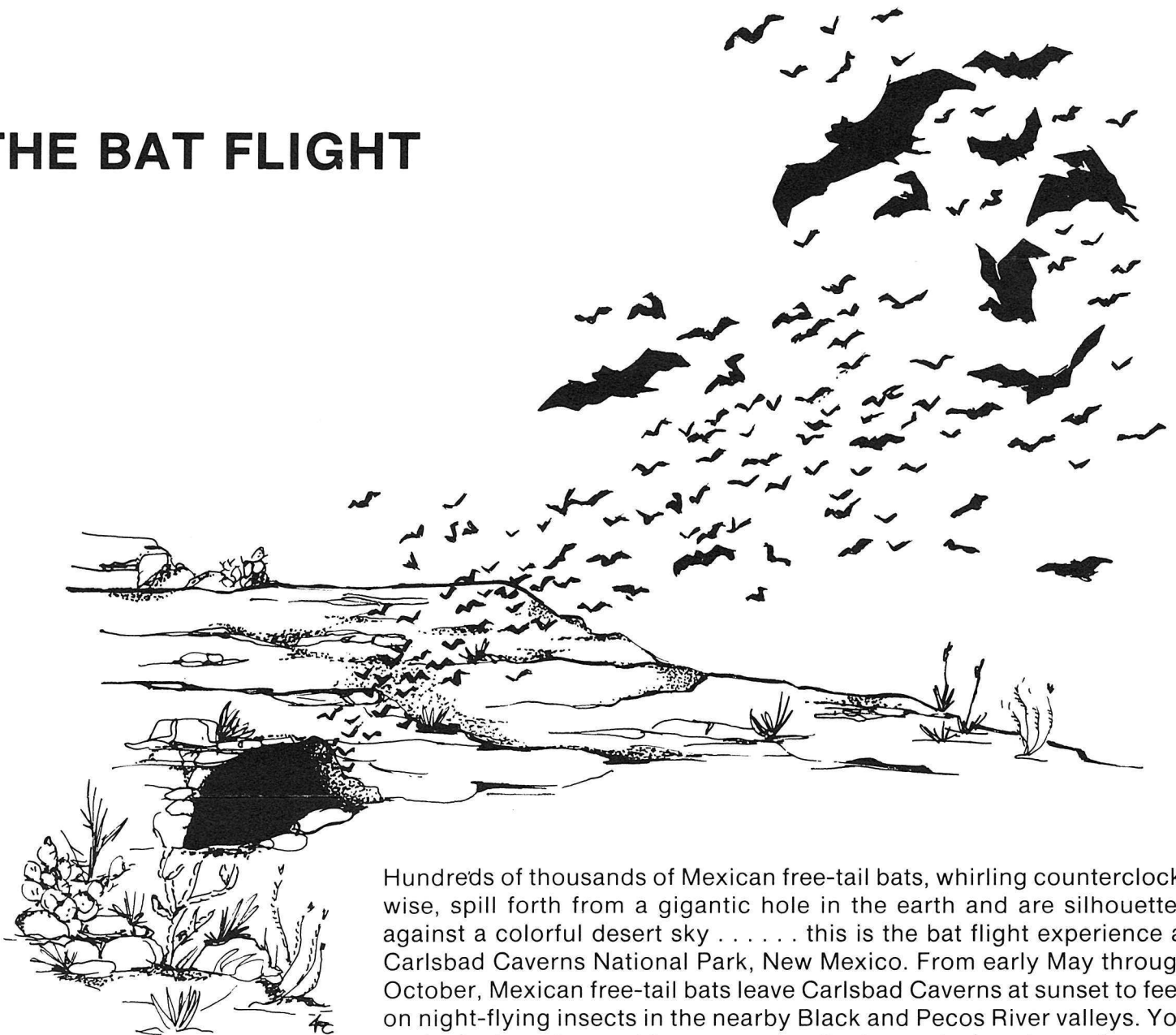


THE BAT FLIGHT



Hundreds of thousands of Mexican free-tail bats, whirling counterclockwise, spill forth from a gigantic hole in the earth and are silhouetted against a colorful desert sky this is the bat flight experience at Carlsbad Caverns National Park, New Mexico. From early May through October, Mexican free-tail bats leave Carlsbad Caverns at sunset to feed on night-flying insects in the nearby Black and Pecos River valleys. You are invited to witness this spectacular display as the bats leave the cave.

Bat Flight Program

Prior to the evening flight of the bats, a talk is given at the cavern entrance by a park ranger. Since the starting time of the talk varies with sunset, it is best to call the park or check at the visitor center information desk for the exact time. In the event of inclement weather, a program about bats will be given in the visitor center. The bat flight talks are normally scheduled from Memorial Day weekend through the end of September. There is no charge for the bat flight program. In late October or early November the bats migrate to Mexico for the winter.

Best Flights

The best bat flights normally occur in August and September. At this time baby bats, which were born in the early summer, join the flight along with migrating bats from points farther north.

Return Flights

The daily pre-dawn return of the bats is different from the exit flights but just as impressive. Early risers can see the bats as they re-enter the cavern with spectacular dives from a height of hundreds of feet. Individual bats coming in from every direction may reach speeds of 25 m.p.h. or more.

Bat Flight Breakfast

A bat flight breakfast is held annually, usually on the second Thursday in August, from 5:00 am to 7:00 am. Park employees sponsor this breakfast once each year to encourage visitors to watch the bats as they return to the cavern. A special program is also given and other activities may be scheduled if staffing permits. A reasonable charge is made for the breakfast and regular fees for cave entry apply for the lantern tour.

For Your Comfort/Safety

Flash photography is not permitted as it may disturb the bats. Please remain in the seating area during the bat flight program. The bats fly out of the cave entrance in front of the seating area but away from park visitors. Please do not handle bats or other wildlife; they can bite and may carry disease. Special spaces to accommodate wheelchairs are located at the entrance to the amphitheater. Restrooms are available and are handicapped accessible. Pets are not allowed in the amphitheater area.

Additional reading on bats

- Barbour, Roger W. and Wayne H. Davis. ***Bats of America***. Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1969.
- Fenton, M. Brock. ***Just Bats***. Ontario, Canada: University of Toronto Press, 1983.
- Geluso, Kenneth N., J. Scott Altenbach, and Ronal C. Kerbo. ***Bats of Carlsbad Caverns National Park***. Carlsbad, New Mexico: Carlsbad Caverns Natural History Association, 1987.
- Hill, John E. and James D. Smith. ***Bats, A Natural History***. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1984.
- Mohr, Charles. ***The World of the Bat***. New York: J. B. Lippincott Co., 1976.
- Novick, Alvin. ***The World of Bats***. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1969.
- Schober, Wilfred. ***The Lives of Bats***. New York: Arco Publishing, Inc., 1984.
- Yalden, D. W. and P. A. Morris. ***The Lives of Bats***, Quadrangle/The New York Times Book Co., 1975.

For further information on bat flights please write or call Carlsbad Caverns National Park, 3225 National Parks Highway, Carlsbad, New Mexico 88220. 505/785-2232.