

A Nursery for Bats



PROTECT OUR BATS

Bats are very important for keeping insect populations in balance.

For nearly 60 years, the railroad pier in front of you was a busy transfer point for logs bound for mills 90 miles to the north. Today, it's a spring and summer nursery for several thousand mother bats and their newborn pups.



FEMALE BATS GATHER IN COLONIES TO GIVE BIRTH AND RAISE THEIR YOUNG. SOME OF THE BATS WILL DIE IF THE COLONY IN THE PIER IS DISTURBED.

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SOLVING A MYSTERY



For a long time, no one knew where these bats went to feed at night.

In 2003 a researcher radio-tagged some bats here at the Woodard Bay roost. He picked up their signal about 8 miles away at Capitol Lake in downtown Olympia, where he found thousands of bats feeding. This is the longest known bat feeding commute in North America.



Little Brown Myotis Bat



Yuma Myotis Bat



Little Brown Myotis Bat Wing

PUPPING

Each spring, thousands of pregnant Yuma Myotis as well as a smaller number of Little Brown Myotis bats gather at the pier. They give birth in mid-June. Females and pups roost together during the day, clinging to the dark underside of the pier.

FEEDING

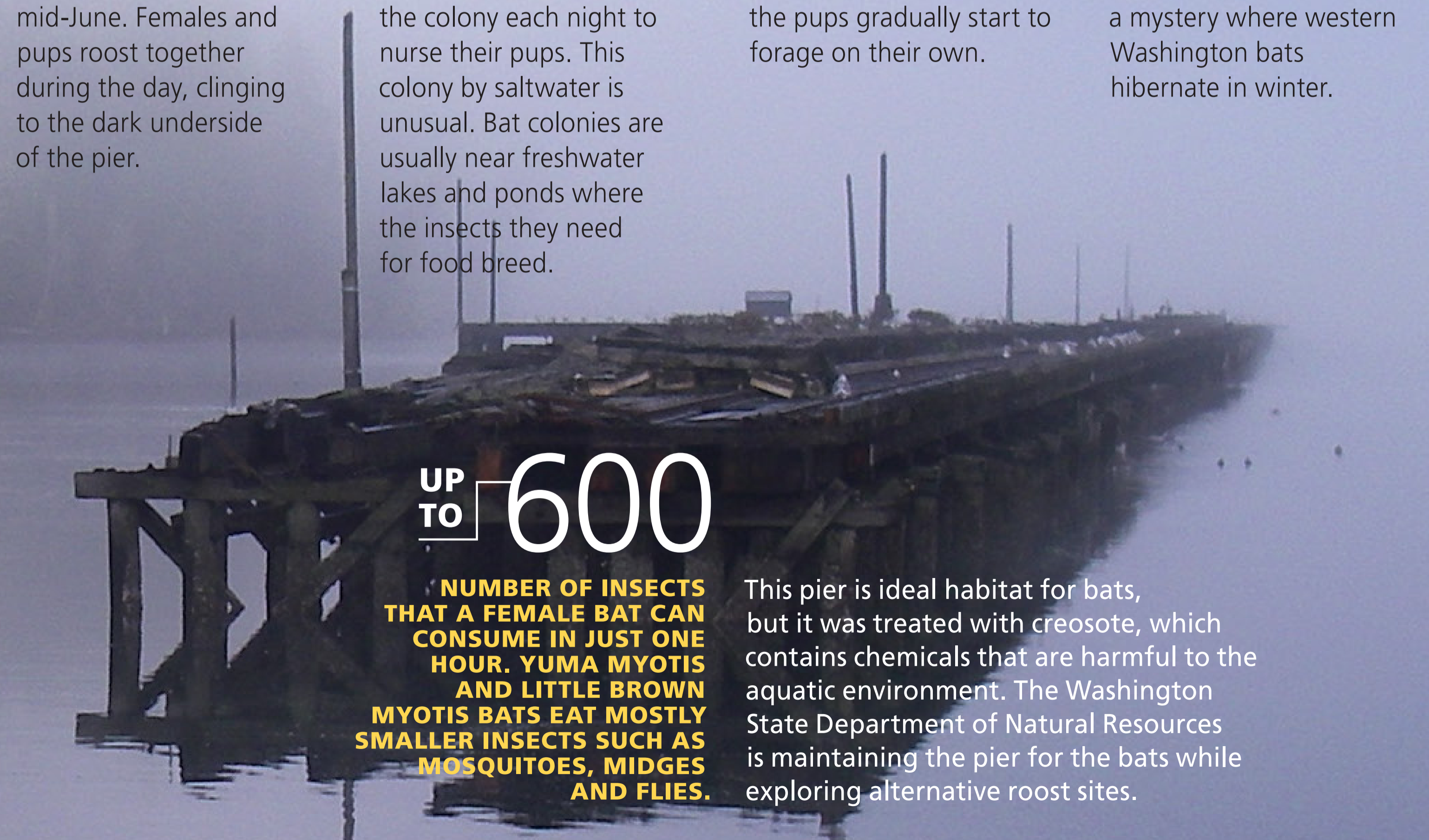
At night the females emerge to hunt for flying insects. Bats typically fly a few miles from their roost to a feeding site and usually make a few trips back to the colony each night to nurse their pups. This colony by saltwater is unusual. Bat colonies are usually near freshwater lakes and ponds where the insects they need for food breed.

LEARNING

Pups start flying at about one month old and use the pier as cover for their first practice flights. Their mothers teach them how to hunt. As they are weaned, the pups gradually start to forage on their own.

MOVING ON

When the pups begin to fly, mothers and pups gradually leave the pier and disperse to other roosting and foraging sites miles away. It's still a mystery where western Washington bats hibernate in winter.



UP TO 600

NUMBER OF INSECTS THAT A FEMALE BAT CAN CONSUME IN JUST ONE HOUR. YUMA MYOTIS AND LITTLE BROWN MYOTIS BATS EAT MOSTLY SMALLER INSECTS SUCH AS MOSQUITOES, MIDGES AND FLIES.

This pier is ideal habitat for bats, but it was treated with creosote, which contains chemicals that are harmful to the aquatic environment. The Washington State Department of Natural Resources is maintaining the pier for the bats while exploring alternative roost sites.