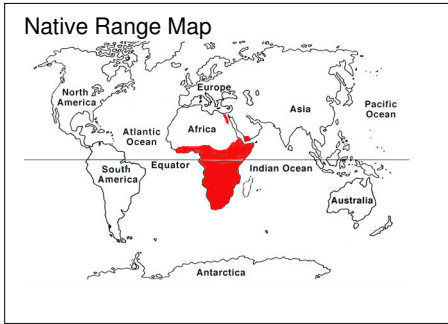


Egyptian Fruit Bat



Kingdom: Animalia
Phylum: Chordata
Subphylum: Vertebrata
Class: Mammalia
Order: Chiroptera
Family: Pteropodidae
Genus: *Rousettus*
Species: *aegyptiacus*

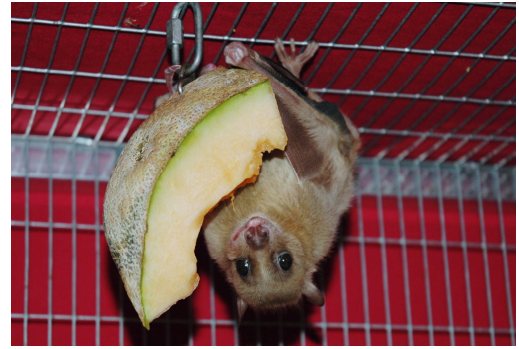


Photo courtesy of Karen Marzynski

Habitat

- **In the Wild:** Egyptian fruit bats are found in southern, western, and eastern Africa, Egypt, the Middle East, and Cypress. They live where there are fruit and flowers, in a variety of habitats from lowlands to mountains.
- **Exhibit Location:** Adaptation of Animals, Zoo to You Collection

Characteristics

- Wing span: 12-14 inches; Head/body length: 3.75-7 inches; Weight: 4-6 ounces
- Egyptian fruit bats are brown, with large eyes, a dog-like face, and rounded ears. They have a vestigial (trace) tail, the typical claw on the thumb, and also a claw on the adjacent finger.
- Males are generally larger than females.
- **Lifespan: In the Wild** 8-10 years; **In Captivity** record is 22 years

Behaviors

- The Egyptian fruit bat is unique in this suborder of Old World fruit bats, in that they roost mainly in caves rather than in tall trees like bats of the genus *Pteropus*. Roosting in large numbers, they are among the largest animal groupings in the world (up to 2,000 individuals).
- There is a constant hum of noise from their squabbling and fighting throughout the day. They fight over roosting spots, females, and food. They do this with wings half open, but with mouths closed. It looks as though they are “boxing” each other with their wings. Loud screeching is heard while the fighting occurs.
- When a fruit tree has been located, the bats circle it before grasping the branches. Ripe fruit is found by their keen sense of smell and eyesight. The juicy pulp is either eaten right away or taken away in special cheek pouches for eating later.
- They don't use echolocation for hunting like bats that eat insects. Instead, they use rudimentary echolocation for navigation through darkness. They are nocturnal (active at night).
- **Enrichments at the Zoo:** large pieces of fruit, natural sticks, small stuffed animals, branches with leaves

Reproduction

- Females reach sexual maturity at 5 months of age. Males attain this at 15 months.
- Mating occurs from June through September in the wild. There is no pair bonding. The gestation period is 4 months.
- Females give birth to a single young, with twins being rare. The average weight at birth is 0.8 ounces. The young are weaned in early March, and stay in the same colony as their parents for most, if not all, of their lives. Offspring are protected from disturbance by other bats within the colony by the mother surrounding it with her wings, completely covering it. Usually the young bat's head can be seen resting in the bend of the mother's wrist.
- Within a few days after birth, the baby opens its eyes and begins to take its first steps. (These are done without letting go of mom's teat, or breast.) At 3 weeks, the wings are fully extended and the baby begins to explore its surroundings. Mom and baby chirp back and forth to each other to keep in touch during this exploration. The mother will leave it hanging on its own for short periods of time. By 6 weeks, the baby is able to fly.

Diet

- **In the Wild:** variety of fruits from tropical shrubs and trees, figs, flower nectar, fruit juices, pulp
- **At the Zoo:** fruit, fruit mix, egg white

Conservation Status

- **IUCN status:** not listed; **CITES Appendix:** not listed
- There numbers are declining due to loss of habitat from a combination of agricultural development and the effects of political instability in the area. They may also be hunted for food or folk remedies.
- Predators: snakes, raptors, mustelids, cats

Did You Know?/Fun Facts

- They are also known as “dog bats” because of their facial structure.
- Like other fruit bats, it looks a little fox-like and is often referred to as a “flying fox.”
- The order Chiroptera is derived from chiro = hand and ptera = wing.
- “Megabats” represent one of the 18 families of bats. They live in the Old World tropics and are fruit eaters. Egyptian fruit bats are among the smallest of the Megachiroptera and the only one in that group that uses echolocation. This is the only type of bat echolocation that can be heard by the human ear. (Sounds are made by suddenly releasing the tongue upward from the floor of the mouth rather than the sounds being made in the larynx, the voice box in the throat).
- About 70% of the world’s fruit is solely pollinated by bats.
- They are considered symbols of good fortune in some places in the world.

Sources:

- EcoTravel, (2005). Mammals of south africa. Retrieved Oct. 22, 2005, from EcoTravel Web site: http://www.ecotravel.co.za/Guides/Wildlife/Vertebrates/Mammals/Smaller/Egyptian_Fruit_Bat.htm.
- Organization for Bat Conservation, (2005). Bat information: the egyptian fruit bat (*rousettus aegyptiacus*). Retrieved Oct. 22, 2005, from Organization for Bat Conservation Web site: <http://www.batconservation.org/content/Egyptianfruitbatinfo.html>.
- The Centre for the Conservation of Specialized Species, (2004). Egyptian fruit bat. Retrieved Oct. 22, 2005, from The Centre for the Conservation of Specialized Species Web site: <http://www.conservationcentre.org/scase2.html>.