

Taxonomic Structures and Glossary of Terms Referenced in Georgia's Protected Mammals Accounts

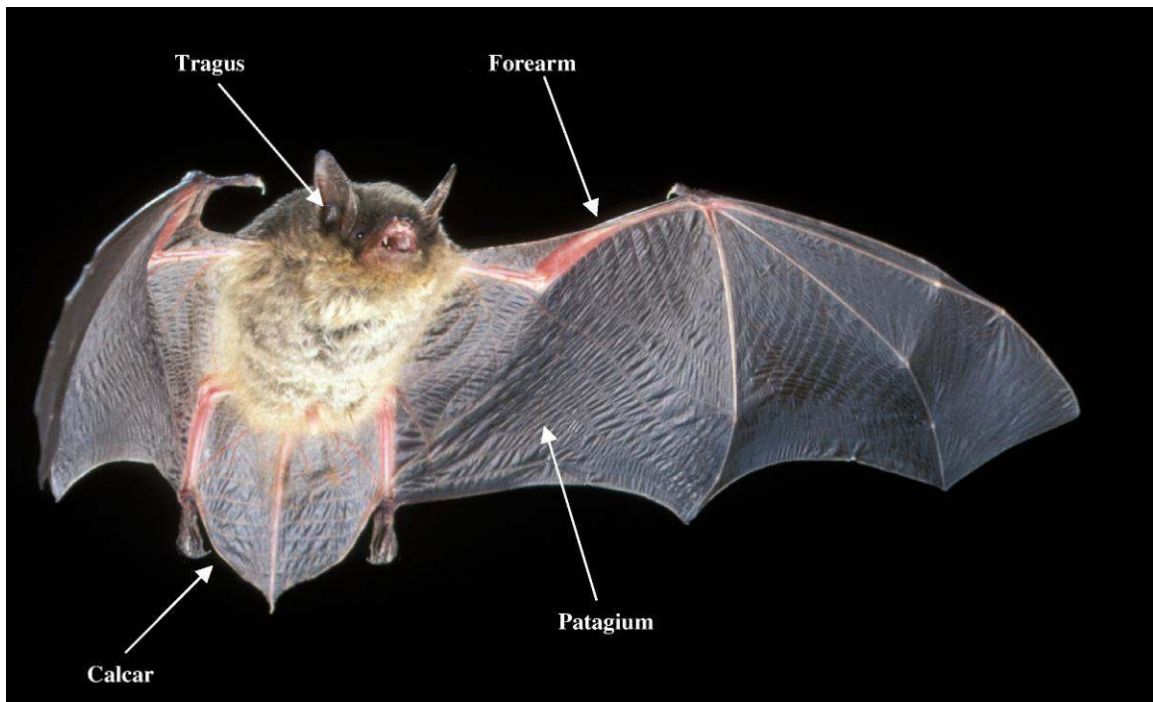


Figure 1. Important taxonomic characteristics labeled on a gray bat (*Myotis grisescens*). Photo by J. Scott Altenbach.

Glossary of Terms

Adapted. An organism that has changed its structure or habits to produce better adjustment to the environment; expression of a genetically determined characteristic that enhances the ability of an organism to cope with its environment.

Aggregation. A group of organisms of the same or different species living closely together but less integrated than a society.

Aquatic. An organism that lives in water at least most of its life.

Auditory bullae. The auditory (hearing) vessicle with the tympanic floor derived from only the petrosal plate and ectotympanic bone.

Bachelor cave. A cave in which a large majority, if not all, the occupants are male.

Baleen. Bony plates in the upper jaws of whales used to strain plankton from the water.

Boreal. Occurring in the temperate and subtemperate zones of the Northern Hemisphere.

Buff. A pale yellowish brown.

Burrow. A hole or tunnel in the ground made by an animal for habitation and refuge.

Cache. A place where some animals store food and other supplies.

Calcar. n. A spur of cartilage arising from inner side of ankle and running along part of outer wing of some species of bats.

Calving ground. n. An area used as a place for females (of some species) to give birth.

Carrion. n. The decaying flesh of dead animals.

Colonial. Animals that live together in groups.

Commensal. Different organisms living in close association with each other; one is benefited and the other is neither benefited nor harmed; in close association with humans.

Courtship. Any behavioral interaction between individuals of opposite sexes that facilitates mating.

Critical Habitat. Habitats required for an organism to survive.

Cusp. adj. A pointed or rounded projection on the chewing surface of a tooth.

Deforestation. Removal of trees from an area without adequate replanting.

Detritus. n. Fragments of organic material.

Disjunct. A group or population separate from other parts of a group or population.

Disperse. To move away from the place of birth or from centers of population density.

Dispersal. Movements that occur within the lifetime of the individual, as, for example, when it leaves its natal site.

Distend. To push out.

Diurnal. adj. Active during the daytime.

Dormant. adj. Sleeping or otherwise inactive with some bodily processes such as heart rate and breathing slowed down.

Dorsal. adj. Relating to the back.

Dorsum. n. Upper surface of the body. Ex. dorsoventrally compressed: flattened along a horizontal plane. Contrast. laterally compressed: flattened along a vertical plane.

Echolocate. v. Emit high frequency sound pulses and gain information about the surrounding environment from the returning echoes.

Ecotone. A zone of transition between habitat types.

Emergent. Above the surface; often referring to water but can refer to other situations (eg. canopy).

Endemic. adj. Native or confined to a certain region.

Estrus. n. A regular recurrent period of ovulation in female mammals (except higher order primates in which the period is called heat) during which they are ready to mate...

Extinct. Of a species, no longer represented by living individuals.

Extinction. The loss of a species, which is often a natural process and the ultimate fate for all species.

Extirpate. v. To eliminate a population from a given area.

Fecundity. n. The capability of producing offspring.

Fertilization. The penetration of an egg by a sperm with the subsequent combination of paternal and maternal DNA.

Flukes. The two horizontally flattened halves of a whale's tail.

Forage. v. To wander in search of food. n. Plants, including grains and grasses, eaten by animals.

Forearm. n. Portion of the arm between the elbow and the wrist. Measured to determine species identification for some bats.

Fossorial. adj. Adapted for living underground.

Gestation. The length of time from fertilization until birth of the fetus.

Guano. Bat fecal droppings that often accumulate in large amounts where colonies roost.

Habitat Fragmentation. A condition in which the continuous area of similar habitat is reduced and divided into smaller sections because of roads, fields, and towns.

Herbivorous. An organism that consumes plant matter.

Hibernaculum. n. The case, covering or structure in which an organism remains dormant for the winter.

Hibernate. v. To go into winter dormancy.

Home range. Area used by an animal in its normal daily activities. Not defended.

Inbreeding. The mating of individuals who are more closely related than by chance alone.

Incisors. n. Teeth anterior to the canines that are used for cutting or gnawing.

Insectivore. An organism that consumes a diet of insects, other small arthropods, or worms.

Interstices. n. Small spaces between objects.

Invertebrate. An organism without a backbone.

Juvenile. A generalized age category between immature and adult; may or may not be sexually mature.

Keystone species. A species whose impacts on its community or ecosystem are large, and much larger than would be expected from its abundance.

Krill. n. Tiny marine crustaceans that are major food items of whales, some fish and certain birds.

Lactating. When a juvenile mammal consumes milk produced by its mother.

Maternity colony. n. A group of pregnant or nursing animals that gather into a single large colony for the purpose of rearing young.

Marine. adj. Having to do with the sea, including salt water gulfs and oceans.

Metabolic rate. Energy expenditure measured in kilojoules per day.

Migrate. v. The periodic movement of animals from one region of land or water to another.

Mitochondrial DNA (mtDNA). All or part of the circular DNA molecules found within mitochondria; in mammals, mtDNA is just over 16,000 bases long and contains 2 ribosomal RNA genes, 13 protein-coding genes, 22 transfer RNA genes, and one large noncoding (control) region.

Molting. v. The seasonal replacement of hair (in mammals) or feathers (in birds).

Monogamous. adj. Having only one mate for a season or a lifetime.

Mortality. Death, usually expressed as a rate.

Nictitating membrane. A thin membrane that functions as a “third eye-lid” in certain species.

Nocturnal. adj. Active during night hours.

Omnivorous. adj. Having the ability or natural inclination to use both animal and plants as food.

Parasite. n. An organism that draws nutrients from another living organism. The second organism, called a host, is often harmed by the relationship.

Patagium. n. A membrane stretching from the body wall to the limbs or tips of digits; it serves as the airfoil in gliding mammals and the wing in bats.

Plankton. n. Tiny aquatic plant and animal organisms that drift together in large numbers.

Poaching. v. The illegal taking of plants, fish or game.

Posterior. adj. Located toward the rear.

Predator. n. An organism that preys upon other animals for food or habitat.

Radiotelemetry. A method for determining the location and movements of an animal by using a transmitter affixed to the individual, the signals from which are monitored with an antenna and a receiver from known points in the study area.

Rhizome. Horizontal, underground stem, often giving rise to new plants at the tip or at the nodes.

Roost(ing site). n. A place where birds or bats rest or sleep.

Rostrum. The forward extension of the nasal region of the face and upper jaw.

Solitary. adj. An animal that spends the majority of its time alone.

Species. n. A category of organisms possessing a lineage independent of other lineages, capable of evolving independently and reproducing.

Spelunker. n. A person who explores caves.

Subspecies. n. A subdivision of a species based on geographic distribution; a subspecies is usually formally named.

Subterranean. Living underground for all activities.

Succession. The orderly process of replacement of one community with another.

Summer resident. n. An animal which spends only summer in an area before migrating to another place for winter.

Tragus. n. A projection from the lower margin of the ear of many bats that functions in echolocation.

Troglobite. n. An animal adapted to life within a cave or other underground structure.

Ventral. adj. Relating to the belly, or underside.

Volant. adj. Having powered flight.

White-nose Syndrome. n. A fatal disease impacting North American bats likely caused by the fungus *Geomyces destructans*.

Year-round resident. n. An animal that does not migrate.

Some definitions from:

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