How Do Bats Find Their Way at Night?



A Real Night Flyer

“Look, a real one!” Jo whispers. A brown bat loops above the garden. Their paper Halloween bat stays still on the window. Jo and Dad watch the hunter. It can see, and it has another way to find things. What could it be?





A Call Goes Out

The bat makes a very high call, above what most people can hear. Follow the gold lines toward the moth. They help us picture invisible sound. The call reaches the moth. What do you think happens next?

> **TALK ABOUT IT**
> The bat's call reaches the moth. What might happen next?

An Echo Comes Back

Back comes an echo—the bat's own sound returning! Follow the teal lines back to those big ears. Finding things with returning sounds is called echolocation. The moth did not need to answer. The bat listens for its own call coming back.





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A Way Around

Now there is a branch in the bat's path. The branch is silent. It makes no call at all! Think about the moth and the returning sound. Could the bat use echolocation to find a silent branch too?

> **TALK ABOUT IT**
> Can echolocation help the bat find a silent branch?

How Close Is the Moth?

The bat listens for how soon its echo returns. A close moth means a short trip for the sound—out and back! A farther moth means a longer trip, so the echo takes longer. Just the timing of a returning sound can help the bat find its dinner.





A Night Neighbor

Jo grins as the bat loops past. Dad smiles back. “Let’s leave it to its hunting.” Call out, echo back—the night flyer goes on its way. Many bats find food with echolocation. That paper Halloween bat will never seem quite the same again.

Check your wonder

1 **What does echolocation use to find things?**

- **A.** The bat's calls bouncing back
- **B.** Only sounds made by other animals
- **C.** Only the bat's outgoing call

2 **A moth moves farther away. What happens to the sound's trip out and back?**

- **A.** It takes longer to come back
- **B.** It comes back sooner
- **C.** Distance makes no difference to the return time

3 **A fence is silent. Could it still return an echo?**

- **A.** Yes, the bat's sound can bounce off it
- **B.** No, the fence would need to call

ANSWERS 1-A 2-A 3-A

1. Call out, echo back! The bat listens to returning sound to find things. 2. Yes! A longer trip takes more time. That helps the bat work out how far away the moth is. 3. Yes—even a silent fence can reflect the bat's call.

THE END

Put your child in this story

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