

Austin is "Batty"

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Austin, Texas, is known as one of the most dynamic cities in the southern United States. Not only is it the Lone Star State's capital, but it is home to the University of Texas, and is one of the nation's top centers for computer technology. One of its mottos is "Keep Austin Weird," for its many eclectic attractions, neighborhoods, and people.

One of Austin's top tourist attractions, however, has nothing to do with its people. Living within the eaves and crevices of the Ann W. Richards Congress Street Bridge is the world's largest urban bat colony. An estimated 1.5 million Mexican free-tailed bats live underneath the bridge in downtown Austin. Hundreds of spectators gather in the summer and early fall each night to watch the incredible horde of bats take flight in the dim evening light to feed. The Austin bats are thought to consume an incredible ten to twenty thousand pounds of insects every night, including many that are considered agricultural pests such as moths and grasshoppers. The bats also consume a prodigious amount of mosquitoes. The bats, which can reach speeds of sixty miles per hour in flight, typically feed for about an hour. The colony of bats roughly doubles in size in June, when female bats give birth to a single pup. Within six weeks, the pups learn to fly and feed on their own, which gives rise to even more incredible emergences. In October or early November, when the weather turns colder, the bats migrate south.

The bats have become such an iconic symbol of Austin, that the city built the Statesman Bat Observation Center to give visitors a dedicated place to observe the incredible scene. Over 100,000 people visit the observation center each year, which pumps more than ten million dollars into the local economy. In this way, the city of Austin has successfully turned a wonder of nature into an economic asset.

**1. Which of the following is NOT TRUE about Austin?**

- A. It is the capital of Texas
- B. It one of the most dynamic cities in the northern United States.
- C. It is home to the University of Texas
- D. One of its mottos is "Keep Austin Weird"

**2. Which of the following would be the best time to see the bats?**

- A. January 15 at about 5:00 P.M.
- B. March 4 at 7:00 P.M.
- C. June 22 at 2:00 P.M.
- D. July 19 at 8:15 P.M.

**3. Where are the bats in December?**

- A. In downtown Austin
- B. Under the Ann W. Richards Congress Street Bridge
- C. Somewhere south of Austin
- D. They migrate to locations west of Austin

**4. Circle all of the reasons that the bats benefit the city of Austin.**

- A. They help control insect populations
- B. They help control rodent populations
- C. They attract tourists who spend money in Austin
- D. They can reach speeds of over 60 miles per hour

**5. What word could replace “prodigious” in the following sentence?**

The bats also consume a prodigious amount of mosquitoes.

- A. incredible
- B. helpful
- C. helpless
- D. moderate

**6. The Mexican free-tailed bat colony of Austin...**

- A. spends the whole year in Austin.
- B. is the world’s largest colony of bats
- C. feeds for several hours each night
- D. is the world’s largest colony of bats that lives in a city.

**7. What question IS NOT answered in the second paragraph?**

- A. How long does it take pups to learn to feed on their own?
- B. How many people visit the observation center each year?
- C. What happens to the colony in June?
- D. What kinds of insects do the bats consume?