

Build a Bat With Flapping Wings

Discover the only flying mammals by making a hands-on craft!



Materials Needed:

Bat template printable (or draw your own), brown or black construction paper, pencil, scissors, straw, thin cardboard, glue, tape.

Instructions:

Step 1: Cut out the bat template along the solid line. Trace it on construction paper, and cut out two identical bat shapes.

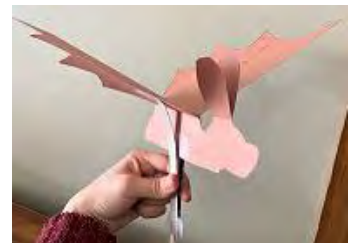
Step 2: Stack the two bat shapes on top of each other. Fold the wings away from each other, along the dotted line illustrated on the template. Glue the body pieces together. Make sure not to glue the wings or ears!

Step 3: Cut two slits down the sides of your straw, about $\frac{1}{2}$ inch (1 $\frac{1}{4}$ cm) long. Slip the body of the bat into the cut portion of the straw, and tape the straw to each side of the bat.

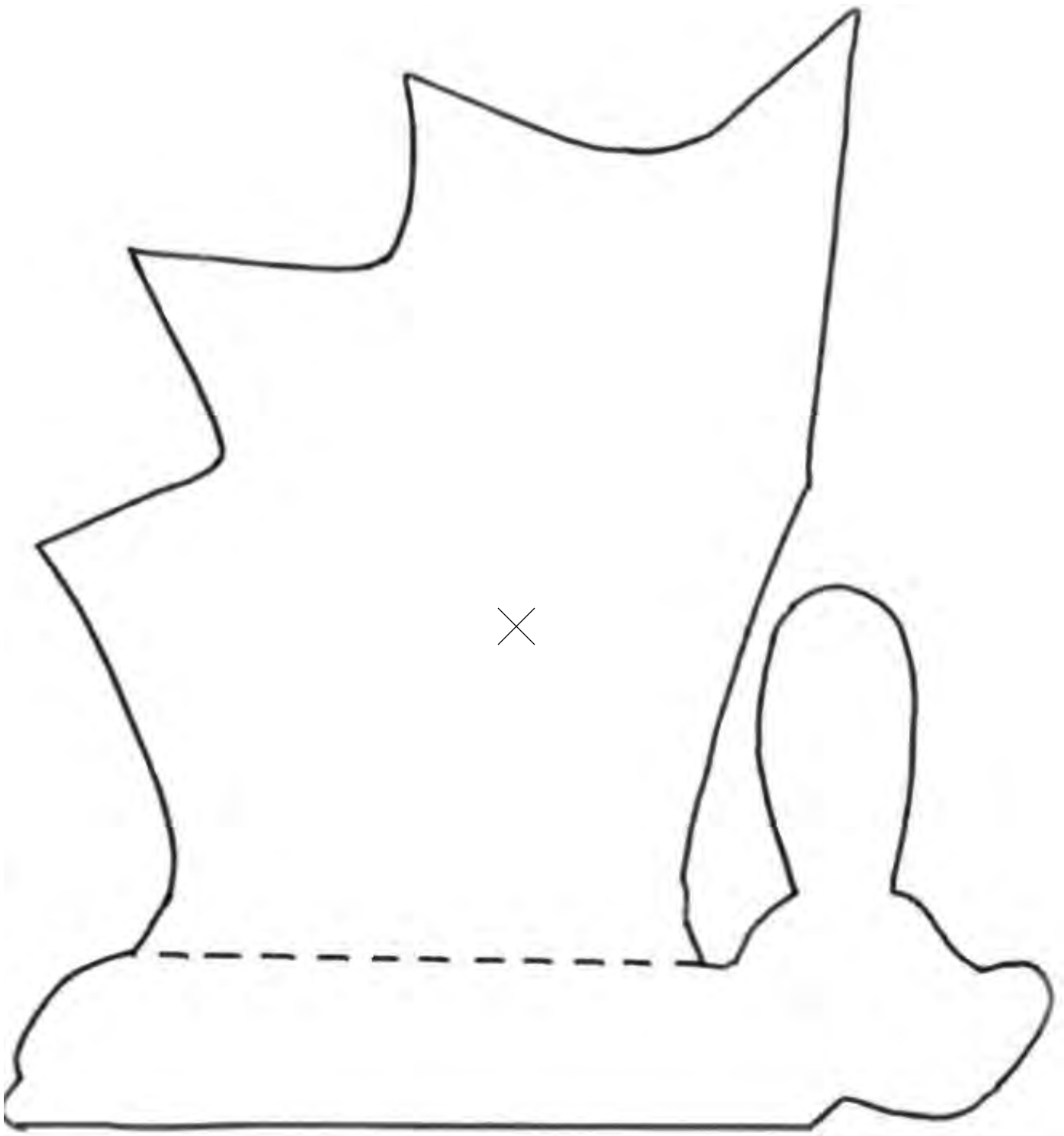
Step 4: Cut out two strips of thin cardboard, each about 6 inches (15 cm) long and $\frac{1}{2}$ inch (1 $\frac{1}{4}$ cm) wide. Tape the top of one strip to the middle of the bat's wing, at the spot marked by an X on the template. Turn the bat over and tape the other cardboard strip to the other side.

Step 5: Tape the bottoms of the two cardboard strips together, around the straw. Be careful not to tape the cardboard to the straw.

Step 6: Move the cardboard "flappers" up and down to make your bat fly!



Bat Template Printable



Template adapted from batslive.pwnet.org/Dreamweaver/pdf/flap_for_bats.pdf

Bats: The Flying Mammals

Bats are the only mammals who can fly. Other mammals, like the flying squirrel and flying lemur, glide rather than actually fly.



Bat wings. Image: National Park Service.

Bats are members of the order *Chiroptera*, which is Greek for “hand wing.” Bats have four long fingers and a thumb, connected by a thin layer of skin called a membrane. Their flexible wings and movable joints allow them to change direction quickly in midair. They can fold their wings the way we move our fingers, making bats excellent at maneuvering in the air.

There are more than 1,300 species of bats in the world, making them the second most common group of mammals after rodents. Bat species are incredibly diverse, ranging from the tiny bumblebee bat, weighing less than a penny, to giant flying foxes with six-foot wingspans.

Seven species of bats live in Alaska. The most common is the little brown bat (*Myotis lucifugus*), which lives in Interior, Southeast, and Southcentral Alaska. They are 3 to 4.5 inches (7.5 to 11 cm) in length. Little brown bats are generally nocturnal. They use echolocation to find food, which includes insects such as moths, mosquitoes, and beetles. They can eat up to 1,500 insects every night, which is about 50% of their body weight!



Little brown bat. Image: Alaska Department of Fish & Game.

In the cold Alaska winters, there are few insects for bats to eat. So bats hibernate for the winter, lowering their body temperature, metabolism, and breathing rate to reduce the amount of energy they need.

Scientists are working to learn more about bats in Alaska so we can help them survive. You can get involved by reporting when you see a bat, or by monitoring their roosts. Learn more at:

www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=wildlivediversity.citizenscience&project=bats