



Bat Habitat Guide

Due to bat lore and because they are only active at night, bats are often misunderstood and maligned. Most bats are harmless. They are not blind or dirty; they do not get caught in people's hair or infest homes with bedbugs. And, much like other mammals, less than one-half of one percent of all bats contract rabies.

Bats are highly beneficial for insect control, as they are the only major predators of night-flying insects. They pollinate fruit flowers, disperse seeds in tropical rainforests (aiding in reforestation) and are an important source of fertilizer (bat guano is actually mined from caves where bats live). Bats are also valuable in medical research, contributing to the development of navigational aids for the blind.

Even to the casual observer, watching and learning about bats can be both fascinating and educational. By providing a bat house, you may be able to bring these beneficial mammals to your yard.

Here are some questions and answers to help you learn more about bats and bat houses.

Why do bats use houses?

Bats use houses in most areas as nursery colonies. In some areas, they use houses for roosting.

What kinds of bats use bat houses?

Throughout the northern two-thirds of the U.S. and Canada, the Little Brown Bat (*Myotis lucifugus*) and the Big Brown Bat (*Eptesicus fuscus*) have been known to use bat houses. These bats can also be found in the Southeast but are generally replaced by the Southeastern Bat (*Myotis austroriparius*). Pallid bats (*Antrozous pallidus*) are found in arid areas. The Evening Bat (*Nycticeius humeralis*), Eastern Pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus subflavus*), Yuma Myotis (*Myotis yumanensis*) and the Mexican Free-tail Bat (*Tadarida brasiliensis*) will also use bat houses. Any bats that roost in crevices or are found under bridges and in buildings are likely tenants for bat houses.

Do bats live in a house all year round or do they migrate in the winter?

In the northern two-thirds of the U.S. and Canada, most bats migrate south in the Winter. Very few species can survive northern subfreezing temperatures. Bats that inhabit bat houses generally move to an isolated cave or abandoned mine, while tree-roosting bats travel south just like birds. Bats might winter over in bat houses if they are in the southernmost area of the northern section. Because of its hardiness, the most likely bat to winter over is the Big Brown Bat.

How do you attract bats to your bat house?

Bats find bat houses just like birds find bird houses. If a house is in the proper location, meets the bats' requirements and is needed, bats will move in on their own.

How can I determine if I will get bats in my bat house?

Bats like a source of water (streams, marshes and lakes) and an area plentiful with insects. They will travel up to a mile or more to water sources and, in the west, they may travel even greater distances to use man-made water sources. Established older urban areas with large trees and landscaped yards near water can provide bat habitats.

How can I determine if bats live in my area?

Watch for bats at dusk or around street lights at night. You will see them silently soaring and diving. You might also check with a local nature center or pest control company to see if they have received sightings. If you want to have some fun, bat detectors are available from various sources and can be tuned to listen to the echo-locating calls of bats as they feed at night. They can be heard from 30' to 100' away, depending on the species.

Can bats be introduced into areas where they do not live?

If you put up a bat house, you could possibly attract bats and provide a home for them in your yard. But, you cannot

artificially introduce bats because their homing instincts would cause them to leave immediately.

Can I get bats in my house to move into a bat house?

Bats (especially nursery colonies) like attics because of the stable high temperatures and the option to move vertically to select from a range of temperatures under varied weather conditions. Colonies of bachelors tend to like cooler roosts. A bat house is not likely to lure bats out of a long-used attic. If you choose to remove bats from your attic, bat houses are important to ensure the bats an alternative roosting site and keep them from finding another way into your house. You can put a box on the side of your house - next to the entrance being used into the attic. Once the bats move into the bat house, close the attic to keep them from reentering.

When should I hang a bat house and when will bats move in?

Bat houses can be hung anytime. Fall, winter or early spring are preferred. It may take a year to a year-and-a-half to attract bats, although some people report occupancy in only a few hours.

How should I mount my bat house?

Since appropriate temperatures determine whether a house is used, consider geographic factors.

- Cooler areas, such as more northerly ranges or higher elevations, may require that houses be placed in a southerly exposure.
- Bat houses need to have at least six to eight hours of direct sunlight. In areas that are cool, the top third of the bat house exterior may need to be painted black or covered with roofing paper.
- In southern climates, the top third of the house exterior may need to be painted white. This may help the house achieve the 80° - 100°F temperature necessary for nursery colonies. The majority of bats that use bat houses are females, who use them as nurseries. However, a house that is not warm enough for a nursery colony may be right for attracting bachelors.
- Locate houses near a permanent water source and hang them 15' above the ground where they are sheltered from the wind. The higher you can hang the house, the better.
- Houses in trees tend to take longer to become occupied than those on poles or buildings.

Can the bat house be protected from predators?

Take the same precautions you would take with a bird house. Bat houses hung on the sides of buildings are probably safest from predators and are preferred by bats. Bat houses have open bottoms, preventing nesting competition from birds and other animals such as mice and squirrels. The WBU/OBC bat house has a 3/4" opening designed to help keep predators out.

Is it safe to observe the bats roosting in the bat house?

You can carefully observe your bats. The longer they reside in your bat house, the more tolerant they are. If you think you have a nursery colony, you can shine a flashlight inside soon after the mothers leave at dusk in June or early July. Do this only at short intervals and not more than once a week. Young are left behind in the roost for the first three to four weeks. If you disturb the roost too much, they may abandon the house.

All Wild Birds Unlimited Bat Houses are approved by The Organization for Bat Conservation. A portion of the proceeds will go to OBC to support research, rescue, conservation and education projects.

For more information you may contact OBC at:

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We cannot guarantee you will have immediate occupancy if you put up a bat house purchased in our store. But, we can guarantee that your bat house is well constructed and meets the standard requirements suggested by The Organization for Bat Conservation and Bat Conservation International.