Bat-friendly Communities in BC

community bat programs of BC

Why bat-friendly communities?

Bats are important! They are essential to our economy and our ecology. All 15 species of bats in BC eat insects. Bats eat nighttime pests of humans, farm animals, crops and forests. Their organic of control agricultural pests is estimated at $23 billion / year in the U.S.A.

Bats are threatened. Threats include habitat loss, accidental harm, mortality at wind farms, cat predation, and disease, particularly white-nose syndrome. Bats have a long lifespan and low reproductive rate, which make it difficult for populations to recover from impacts.



We can help protect bats and bat habitat. Many bats live in close association with human communities, and a few species rely extensively on human-made structures as sites for roosting and raising offspring.



Stewardship and management of bats at a local level is important for the future of bats in the province. The actions of individuals and municipalities can help protect habitat and build healthy, resilient bat populations. Key actions include: protecting or creating habitats for drinking, foraging, and roosting; reducing hazards for bats, sharing information about bats, and working towards certified bat-friendly communities.







Bats & Humans

- All bats in BC are insectivores
- Never touch a bat with your bare hands – a small percentage carry rabies
- If you or your pet come in contact with a bat, talk to a medical professional / veterinarian immediately
- If you must move a bat, wear gloves and use a trowel, box, or small shovel to move the animal
- Humans and bats CAN safely coexist – see our brochures on Living with Bats and Managing Bats in Buildings
- All bats in BC are protected by the Wildlife Act; some are threatened and endangered and are protected through the federal Species at Risk Act

Got bats? 1-855-922-2287 ~ www.bcbats.ca

Protecting Habitat

Bats need three basic things to survive: water, food, and shelter (roost sites). Well-managed habitats in urban and rural areas can provide all these key elements. Buildings and bat boxes may provide important shelter for some species of bats; this is not sufficient to sustain our bats if they cannot access water to drink or insects to eat.

Water



Not all water sources are available to bats. Bats drink while flying, so they need open pools of clean water without obstacles that could obstruct their flight path. For example, an algae-covered pond is not accessible water for bats unless a section is regularly kept free of debris.

What you can do:

- create or maintain open water features, free of algae and obstacles – 3m long for our smallest bats, more for larger species
- let running water pool to create quiet drinking zones
- maintain water quality by reducing/eliminating pesticides and herbicides
- plant or maintain vegetation near ponds to provide security cover for bats travelling to drink
- provide grippy escape structures such as a rough stick or board, that a bat can climb should it get immersed in artificial ponds or pools

Foraging Habitat

Bat use a wide variety of habitats when hunting their insect prey, including wetlands, forests, shrub and grasslands. The more variety in the plant community and habitats, the more variety and abundance there will be in an insect community.





What you can do:

- plant native trees and shrubs in your yard and community
- plant a bat-friendly garden
- reduce or eliminate pesticides
- retain or restore wetlands, riparian areas, and other natural areas





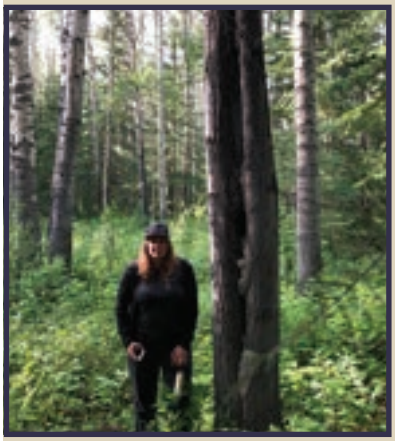
Roosting Habitat



Roosts are sites where bats rest when they are not active. Bat roosts in summer may be day, night, or maternity roosts, and in winter are known as hibernacula.

Bats use existing structures for roosting, including cracks and cavities in trees, rock crevices, buildings, bridges, and bat boxes. Bats do not build nests, chew holes, or otherwise modify the structure of their roosts.

A good roost site will provide (1) protection from weather and predators, (2) suitable temperatures, and (3) easy access, including rough surfaces for landing and crawling.



What you can do:

- retain tall, large-diameter trees as roost trees
- keep damaged and dead trees as wildlife trees when safe to do so
- think ahead - keep trees that will provide future roosts as older trees disappear
- plant native trees - cottonwood and poplar are particularly valuable as roost trees
- when bats are in buildings, learn to live with bats through proper management of bats, guano, noise, etc. to minimize impacts
- if bats must be excluded, always follow the timing calendar to avoid harm to maternity colonies and juvenile bats
- install recommended models of bat boxes, maintain yearly, monitor, and report on use at www.bcbats.ca

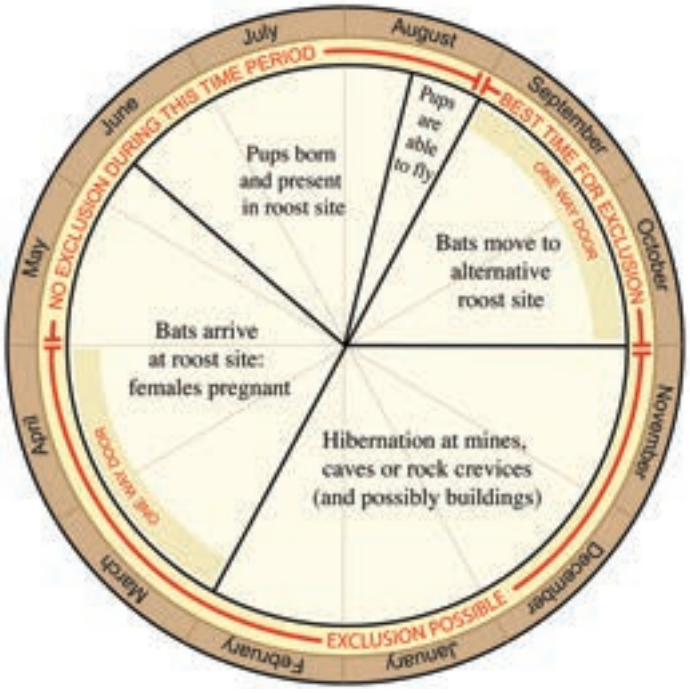
Reducing Hazards

Many day-to-day activities and practices can inadvertently disturb or kill bats

- do not use sticky tape / traps where bats could encounter them
- store empty pails, buckets, and bins upside down to avoid entrapment of bats
- keep cats indoors as they are a main predator of urban and rural bats
- add a screen to chimneys and vents to prevent access (follow Timing Calendar)
- remove weeds (burdock infestations can entrap bats)
- minimize unnecessary nighttime noise and lighting

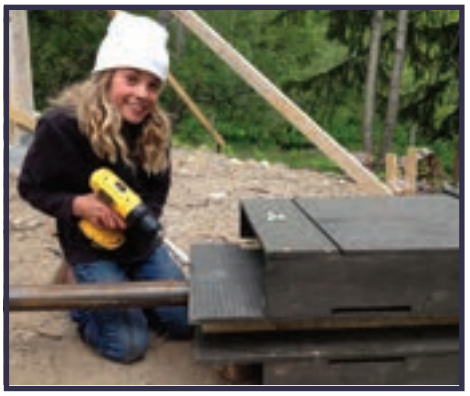


TIMING CALENDAR for BATS in BC



Getting Involved

- Become a Bat Ambassador - https://bcbats.ca/get-involved/become-a-bat-ambassador/
- Participate in citizen-science – BC Annual Bat Count, bridge surveys, winter white-nose surveillance
- Check if your library network has a Bat Pack for loan
- Host a bat walk
- Share your bat knowledge with others
- Reduce pesticide use
- Advocate for green spaces, wetlands, and trees, with a focus on native, bat-friendly plants
- Review/revise by-laws to promote bat-friendly practices
- Incorporate bat habitat protection into community plans



Certification

Communities may choose to become officially certified as a Bat-friendly Community. Work with your regional Community Bat Program to develop a plan to meet these criteria:

1. Protect, create, or enhance habitat
2. Provide information about bats through City Hall / city website
3. Promote learning

Download the full Bat-friendly Communities Guidance document, more details on the criteria, and a step-by-step 'how-to' Primer: https://bcbats.ca/get-involved/-bat-friendly-communities/ ---->



Contact the BC Community Bat Program

Email: info@bcbats.ca *Web:* www.bcbats.ca
Phone: 1-855-922-2287 *Facebook:* www.facebook.com/bcbats

community bat programs of BC

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This project was undertaken with the financial support of:
Ce projet a été réalisé avec l'appui financier de :
Environment and Climate Change Canada
Environnement et Changement climatique Canada

Big thanks to the following people for their use of photos in this handout including Juliet Craig, Tom Koerner (USFSW), Erin Low, Mandy Kellner, Erica Konrad, Harry van Oort, Brian Patterson, Melanie Tata, Scott Thomson, Marcie Welsh & Keya White.