

# Bat Information

## Introduction

Bats are an invaluable natural resource in America, yet their population is in an alarming decline. By putting up a bat house you are helping our bats find a home.

Bats play a vital role in maintaining the balance of nature by being a primary predator of night-flying insects. A single brown bat can catch hundreds of mosquito-sized insects an hour.

## Mounting Suggestions

- Bat houses should be located a half mile or less from a stream, river or pond larger than three acres.
  - Bat houses need at least 6 hours of direct sunlight. A southern or southwest exposure should be considered in locating the house
  - In northern areas of the country, paint houses a dark color to retain heat. In southern areas, white. In the mid section consider painting the top half a darker color and the bottom half white.
  - Mount house 10—15 feet or more above the ground. Placement on sides of structures or poles are preferred to trees. If a tree is your only option, make sure the house is located below the lowest limb so that the bats can fly directly into the structure.
- Houses on structures should be placed close together. If mounting on poles, orient the houses in different directions.
  - Do not place houses on the sides of metal buildings or against metal siding to avoid over heating.
  - Do not place houses on the same pole or in close proximity to a utility light. This will draw too much activity to the nesting area.

With all this being said, I have witnessed bat houses mounted on a privacy fence no more than 5 feet high and being populated with a number of bats.

You will want to pick your installation site with great care to avoid having to move a bat house once it becomes occupied. Most bat houses have open bottoms; so that guano (bat poop) will not accumulate inside. Guano will end up on the ground underneath, however. This can create quite a mess. Avoid placing bat houses directly above windows, doors, decks, or walkways. Bat urine may stain some finishes. Two or four-inch spacers between a bat house and wall, a large backboard, or a longer landing area below a bat house may reduce excrement collecting on a wall. A potted plant, or a shallow tray or plant saucer can be placed underneath a bat house to collect bat guano for use as fertilizer in flower beds or gardens.

Note: do not place too deep of a collection container below the bat house unless you cover it with some type of mesh. Baby bats have been known to drop out of the house. If they should land in a deep container, they may not be able to escape. Some bats are able to retrieve their pups if they fall this way.

## Be a good landlord

Once you have attracted bats, it is your responsibility to maintain the house in good condition to keep bats coming back year after year. Wasp and mud dauber nests should be cleaned out each winter after bats and wasps have departed. New caulk and paint/stain may be required after three to five years to guard against leaks and drafts. Bat houses should be monitored at least once a month to detect potential problems such as predators, overheating, wood deterioration, etc. Any repairs or cleaning should be performed when bats are not present.

## No Bats Yet?

If bats do not occupy your house after two summers:

Try moving the bat house a few feet to receive more or less sun or try raising it higher off the ground

Double check the house location. (see mounting suggestions.)

Bats may not be able to live in your area due to high pesticide use.

Bats have to find new roosts on their own. There are no proven lures or attractants.

Check the temperature inside the house. Make sure the temperature does not rise above 100 degrees in the summer sun.

## Bat Facts

Bats have long been misunderstood by humans. However, today they are being given their proper recognition as a valuable re-

source to mankind.

Many plants, such as bananas and the endangered saguaro cactus are dependent on bats for pollination because they bloom at night

Bats are responsible for 95% of the reforestation of the tropical rain forests through their dispersal of seeds.

They have an enormous capacity for consuming insects. A bat eats insects when they are out (at night). Some bat species consume half their weight in a single night, 600 or more gnat-sized insects per hour.

A single little brown bat (the most abundant in North America) can eat 3,000 to 7,000 mosquitoes each night and can live to be 20 years old.

Bats are generally quite harmless to people.

They do not become tangled in your hair and do not attack humans.

Disease transmission from bats to people is rare.

In the Orient these gentle animals are symbols of good luck, long life and happiness.

Bats navigate by means of a sophisticated echolocation system. They can avoid a single human hair with extreme accuracy, even in total darkness.

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