

Bat Conservation

Bats can be a welcome addition to your property by helping to control mosquitoes and other flying insects. Bats do not deserve their negative reputation for getting themselves tangled in people's hair, drinking blood, or always carrying rabies. In fact, according to Bat Conservation International, a single little brown bat can consume 600 or more mosquitoes in an hour.

Bat Natural History

Bats are furred, winged mammals with body lengths of three to six inches and wingspans varying from eight to sixteen inches. There are 40 species of bats in North America. Most bats hunt flying insects and navigate by emitting pulses of sound through the mouth. Their sensitive ears hear the echoes reflected from even the tiniest of insects. This allows them to steer towards prey and avoid obstacles. They will often fly within inches of people catching the mosquitoes that humans attract. Bats also have keen eyesight on which they rely for long-distance orientation.



Virginia Big-eared bat

Diet

Bats in North America eat primarily insects. A single bat can consume between 500 to 1,000 mosquitoes and insects in an hour depending on the species and the size of the bat.

Roosting

The natural roosting areas for bats are hollow trees, caves, and rock crevices. Bats have also adapted well to human structures, such as old barns, attics, basements, bridges, bat boxes, and other structures.

Rabies

If a random sample were taken of all bats in a given area, less than one-half of one percent would be found to be infected with the rabies virus. However, when bats are brought in to health departments for sampling for rabies, approximately 4% are found to carry the rabies virus. This finding is due to the number of sick bats that are easily caught and sampled.

THE TRUTH ABOUT BATS

Myth: *Bats have rabies.*

Fact: Less than 1/2 of 1% of bats have rabies.

Myth: *Bats get tangled in hair.*

Fact: Bats use echolocation to navigate precisely in the dark. They can easily locate small, flying prey and avoid getting tangled in people's hair.

Myth: *Bats are just flying rats.*

Fact: Bats are a separate species, unrelated to rodents.

CHECK IT OUT:

Bat Conservation International has excellent information on bats: www.batcon.org

The Need For Conservation

Many factors have led to the decline of bat populations. The myths about bats do not endear them to the general population. For years, bats have been poisoned and whole colonies wantonly killed because of needless fears people have towards them. Today, nearly 40 percent of America's bats are threatened or endangered. Many factors have led to the decline of bat populations. The myths about bats do not endear them to the general population. For years, bats have been poisoned and whole colonies wantonly killed because of needless fears people have towards them.

Today, nearly 40 percent of America's bats are threatened or endangered. The popularity of spelunking or "caving" often puts people in bat caves just as young bats are maturing. If adult bats are disturbed, they may abandon their young. Since bats usually raise only one pup each year, bat populations do not increase quickly. If bats are disturbed while hibernating, their energy reserves diminish and they can starve. Lastly, when old buildings and barns are demolished, valuable bat roosting habitats are destroyed.

Attracting Bats

Bats are an important part of many ecosystems. Bats pollinate flowers, help to keep insect populations at manageable levels, and provide excellent opportunities for public education. Putting up a bat box offers bats a place to roost or rear their young. However, it is difficult to attract bats to an area if they are not already present in nearby woodlands, caves, or man-made structures. Bats normally return to the roost where they were born. However construction and loss of habitat may cause local bats to seek new homes. When you are outside at dusk, observe the sky for "birds" that flap their wings quickly, fly slowly and erratically, often swooping over water. They may also be found flying around near a building or parking lot lights looking for an evening meal.

Tips for Constructing and Placing Bat Houses

Bat houses are currently a part of habitat enhancement programs throughout the country. Follow these guidelines for the greatest success in placing bat boxes on your property:

- Do not use chemically treated wood and don't paint the bat box. Rough, natural lumber is best. Use the roughest sides of the wood on the inner areas of the house.
- Caulk all outside seams to limit air flow. This helps trap the bat's body heat inside the box. In cold climates, place tar paper or dark shingles on the top and 4 to 6 inches down the sides to increase inside temperatures. Nursery roosts often require temperatures of 90 degrees F. In the South, paint bat boxes white to avoid overheating.
- Hang houses on the side of a building or on a tree, 10 to 15 feet above the ground. East and southeast exposures are provide maximum solar gain.
- Try a larger box design. Research suggests that larger bat boxes tend to be more successful than small boxes in attracting bats.
- Place bat houses within 1/4 mile of water.
- Locate bat houses away from areas of high pesticide applications.
- Install the house before April to improve the chance of occupancy. If the box is not used within a year or two, try a different location.

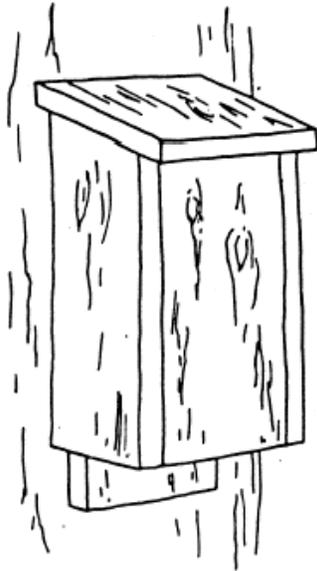


Putting up bat houses creates needed bat roosting sites for these beneficial insect-eaters.

To download this fact sheet and more, visit: www.auduboninternational.org

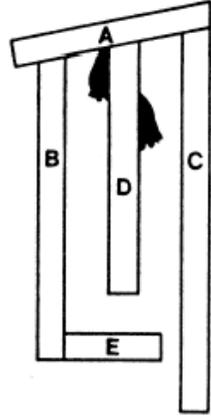
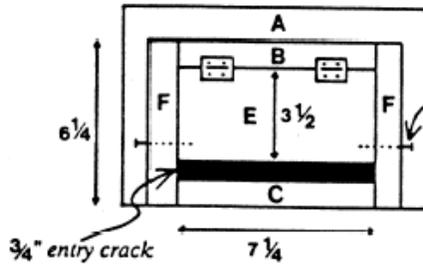
SMALL BAT HOUSE

WILL ACCOMMODATE UP TO 30 BATS



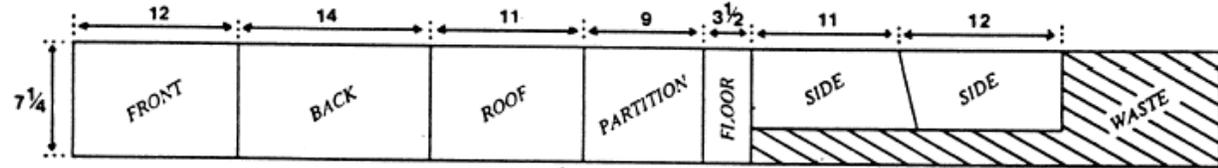
BOTTOM VIEW

Hinges on floor allow for cleaning.
One nail on each side holds floor closed.



Small Bat House Dimensions

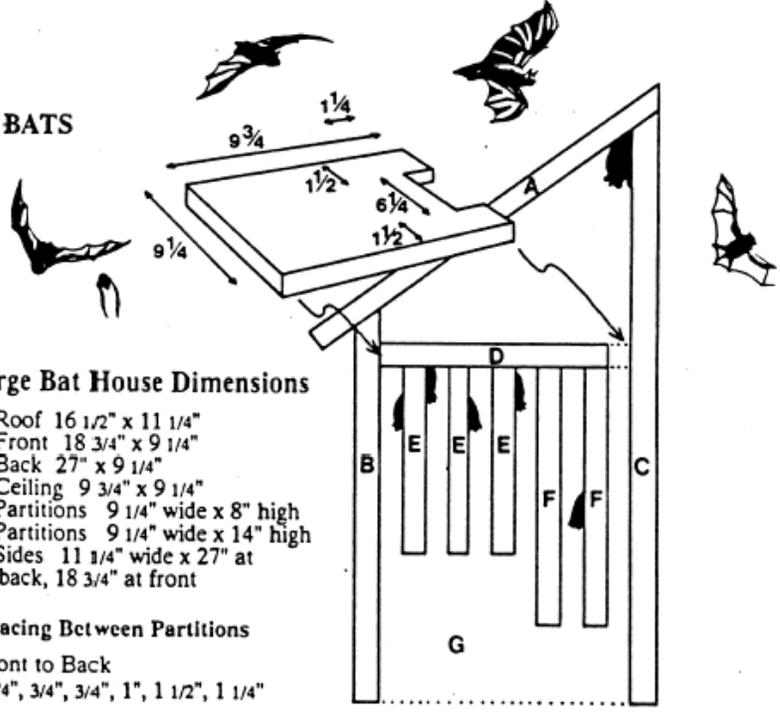
- A Roof 7 1/4" x 11" wide
- B Front 12" x 7 1/4" wide
- C Back 14" x 7 1/4" wide
- D Partition 9" x 7 1/4" wide
- E Floor 3 1/2" x 7 1/4" wide
- F Sides 6 1/4" wide x 12" at back, 11" at front



Lumber for Small Bat House: one 1" x 8" x 7'

LARGE BAT HOUSE

WILL ACCOMMODATE UP TO 100 BATS



Large Bat House Dimensions

- A Roof 16 1/2" x 11 1/4"
- B Front 18 3/4" x 9 1/4"
- C Back 27" x 9 1/4"
- D Ceiling 9 3/4" x 9 1/4"
- E Partitions 9 1/4" wide x 8" high
- F Partitions 9 1/4" wide x 14" high
- G Sides 11 1/4" wide x 27" at back, 18 3/4" at front

Spacing Between Partitions

- Front to Back
- 3/4", 3/4", 3/4", 1", 1 1/2", 1 1/4"

All dimensions in inches.

Wood should be untreated and interior should not be painted or stained.

Large bat house plans adapted from Bat Conservation International with permission.

Reprinted with permission from the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection, Wildlife Division