



BAT ACTIVITY TRENDS

Community Science Program



PACIFIC NORTHWEST BAT HOUSE FAQ

Bats in the Pacific Northwest have specific needs. Whether you want to contribute to conservation efforts or reduce bugs in your yard, it is important to understand what makes the bats around you unique and provide the right house for them. These are the things you should keep in mind when installing a bat house on your property.

What type of bat house should I get?

Be aware that many bat houses sold in garden centers, hardware stores and online are intended for bats living in hot climates like in the Southwest U.S. Local bats are small, insect-eating bats who want houses with crevices of $\frac{1}{2}$ – $\frac{3}{4}$ inch openings. Rocket boxes and/or multi-chamber boxes are the best choice for our bats. These boxes are larger which allows for the best balance of sun exposure and air circulation. We have listed resources below to buy or build a house that will meet the needs of Northwest bats!

What color should my bat house be?

In temperate parts of the Northwest, bat houses should be a dark color. Dark colors help absorb and hold in heat to keep bats warm. Bats need temperatures averaging 95 degrees Fahrenheit to stay warm and preserve their energy. In arid climates like Eastern Washington, medium tone houses work best for local bat species.

Where should I put my bat house?

Bat houses need to be placed 15 feet off the ground and far from trees, rooftops and other structures that could help predators access the bat house. We recommend mounting bat houses on a pole leaving a 15-foot clearing radius around it. Another option is mounting your bat house on a building. Mount the house high off the ground and a few feet away from any eaves, ledges or gutters. Do not mount a bat house in a tree; predators can easily access tree-mounted bat houses.

How long will it take for bats to move in?

Bats have two main shelter needs. One is known as their day roost, where they sleep for long periods of time throughout the day. Day roosts can be occupied by a colony or by individual bats (this is species- and gender-dependent). Bats are usually loyal to their day roost and will not move to a new day roost unless it is damaged or their colony grows too big. Bats also use night roosts to catch a nap between feedings. Night roosts vary greatly and may be used one night and not another. Night roosts provide important habitats, however, it is hard to tell if your bat house is being used as a night roost! Be patient! Check and repair your bat house regularly and know that you are helping even if you don't see occupants during the day.

How can I attract bats to my bat house?

Nothing will guarantee bats will use your bat house; they are wild animals who go where they have their needs met. In addition to shelter, bats need access to fresh water and bugs to eat. Adding a bat-friendly water feature or planting fragrant night blooming plants (which will attract moths) can help bring bats into your area. Be sure your bat house stays dry and damage-free by checking it each winter. Maintain your bat house by repairing any leaks in the roof and cleaning out any insect activity or debris.

Do I have to maintain my bat house?

Yes! You should check on your bat house twice a year. Once in the summer to see if it is occupied. You can do a bat count by watching the bat house during the hour after sunset to see if bats come out, or by placing white paper or fabric under the house on a dry night to see if there is guano (bat poop) present the next morning. In the winter you should check the bat house again. If it is unoccupied you should take the time to do any repairs to be sure that the house is still water-tight and free of debris. Seal cracks, repair roofing, repaint if it is faded. Be sure to clean out the house if there are insects or webbing filling the small spaces.

For bat houses building plans, more information about coexisting with bats and important bat safety information, please visit the following websites:

WOODLAND PARK ZOO
zoo.org/batconservation

BATS NORTHWEST
batsnorthwest.org/bat_houses

You can help bat conservation efforts by informing Fish and Wildlife about known bat roosts or reporting found dead and injured bats:

WASHINGTON DEPARTMENT OF FISH
AND WILDLIFE
wdfw.wa.gov/species-habitats/living/species-facts/bats