



Creating a Bat-Friendly Habitat

There are over 1,400 species of bats worldwide, from the tiny tricolored bat of North America, averaging just over 3 inches (7.6 cm), to the giant golden-crowned flying fox of the Philippines, with a wingspan of up to 5.6 feet (1.7 m).

Contrary to common belief, bats are not blind, and many can even see well in low light. Many species rely on a sophisticated system called echolocation to maneuver, emitting high-pitched sounds that bounce off nearby objects. When the sound returns, it echoes off their enormous ears and pinpoints objects, allowing them to navigate their environment.

What is putting bats at risk?

These curious flying creatures are at risk for numerous reasons, including habitat loss, diseases such as white nose syndrome, climate change, human disturbance, chemical use, artificial illumination, and more. The 2023 published report “State of the Bats” shows “52 percent of bat species in North America are at risk of populations declining severely in the next 15 years.

Did you Know?

These remarkable fliers not only consume vast numbers of insects but also pollinate night-blooming flowers like agave and yucca, making them essential to healthy ecosystems.

How to Provide a Bat House

Bat houses serve as alternative roosting sites, mimicking the snug spaces found underneath tree bark and creating ideal nurseries for bat colonies. In summer, bats prefer roosting in trees, beneath bridges, or in abandoned structures, where they rear their young. However, habitat loss due to deforestation poses significant challenges to their survival. Bat houses are part of the solution!

1. **Mount High:** Install the bat house at least 15 feet above ground to keep it safe from predators.
2. **Sunlight Matters:** Ensure it receives at least 6 hours of direct sunlight daily to maintain a warm, stable interior temperature, essential for nursery colonies.
3. **Provide Nearby Water:** Aim to have a pond or stream nearby, at least 7-10 feet in length, to reduce how far nursing mothers must fly to hydrate.
4. **Roughen the Interior Wood:** Simulate tree bark to help bats grip and climb.
5. **Choose the Right Paint:** Choose a dark to medium exterior color to help retain heat in cool climates. In warm climates, select a light color to help bats stay cool.
6. **Support the Recovering America's Wildlife Act.** Encourage your Congressional representatives to fully support and help pass the Recovering America's Wildlife Act. This historic wildlife legislation offers the best hope for addressing the nation's wildlife crisis.

Sources: 2023 State of the Bats report. (2023, May 17). Bat Conservation. <https://digital.batcon.org/state-of-the-bats-report/2023-report/>
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How to Help Bats

1. **Plant Native.** Support local wildlife by using native species to create habitat.
2. **Build A Bat Box.** Install a bat box to provide safe roosting space for endangered species, including the northern long-eared bat.
3. **Leave The Leaves.** Allow fallen leaves in your yard to provide winter shelter for bats and the insects they often depend upon.
4. **Turn Off Unnecessary Lights.** Keep your yard darker to support bats, using red or down-cast lights if illumination is needed, or better yet, minimize outdoor lighting altogether.
5. **Avoid Using Harmful Chemicals.** Skip pesticides and fertilizers that are harmful to bats and other wildlife. Homeowners use up to 10 times more chemical treatment per acre than farmers.
6. **Be A Voice for Wildlife.** Advocate for bats and other wildlife by engaging friends and family, writing letters, and sharing your voice on social media. No matter how big or small we think we are, when we speak up together, our voices have a huge impact!

Sources (continued): The Benefits of Bats: Celebrating the critical contributions of bats on International Bat Appreciation Day. (n.d.). IUCN. <https://iucn.org/story/202504/benefits-bats-celebrating-critical-contributions-bats-international-bat-appreciation>
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