



Bats

Why have a bat house? Unwarranted human fear has decreased the bat population. Bats eat lawn and garden pests such as mosquitoes.

Will having a bat house increase the chances that bats will move into my attic or wall spaces? No. If bats liked your attic or wall spaces, they probably would already be living there.

What are the odds that a bat will have rabies? Less than half of one percent of bats contract rabies. Even rabid bats rarely become aggressive and they quickly die. Do not attempt to handle bats and the chances of being harmed are remote. A bat should be assumed sick and left alone if it appears easy to catch.

What species of bats will live in a bat house?

Throughout the northern two-thirds of the United States and southern Canada, the little brown bat and the big brown bat are the most likely species to live in bat houses. One little brown bat can catch hundreds of mosquitoes in an hour. One big brown bat can eat 3,000 to 7,000 insects each night.

How do bats raise their young? Hundreds or thousands of expectant mother bats gather to form nursery colonies. They help each other rear their young but each female recognizes their own. Most bats have just one pup per year. Males either bring food to their mate or leave the colony to reduce competition for limited food supplies.

Where do I put up a bat house?

- Sun exposure: Both sun exposure and heat absorption must be carefully considered. Not enough sun exposure is the most important known cause of bat house failure. Daytime temperatures inside the house must be very hot - about 80-90 degrees F. One way to achieve warmth is to cover the bat house with two or more layers of tar paper on top and down a couple inches on the sides. The tar paper absorbs heat from the sun and helps protect bats from the rain. The tar paper can be stapled to the box. Another alternative is to paint the bat house black so it absorbs the heat from the sunlight. Success also increases when the house is caulked and painted to be airtight and watertight.

- Mounting: Bats find houses on poles or buildings (metal siding is not recommended) more than twice as fast as those on trees. Houses on trees tend to receive less sun and may be more vulnerable to predators. Houses should be mounted at least 10 feet above the ground although 15-20 feet is better. They should be mounted on the east side where they will receive the morning sun but will have shade in the afternoon. Bats also seem to prefer sites that are protected from the wind. Houses placed under the eaves on wood or stone buildings tend to be better protected from rain and predators and have been especially successful.
- Habitat: Natural bat flyways are near rivers, lakes, bogs, or marshes where insect populations are high.
- Timing: Bat houses should be placed by early April. It may take a year or two for bats to find the house. Chances of occupancy are better if bats already live in nearby buildings. Houses don't need to be cleaned.

For more information:

- Bat Conservation International/ North American Bat House Research Project
PO box 162603
Austin, TX 78716-2603
1-800-538-BATS
members@batcon.org
- River Keepers
325 7th St. S.
Fargo, ND 58103-1846
701-235-2895
Info@riverkeepers.org
www.riverkeeper.org