

Guidelines for Locating Your Bat House

Sun Exposure: At least five hours of direct sun is recommended for bat houses in Florida. Locate bat houses in clearings with at least 20 feet of open space all around the house.

Habitat: Bat houses should be located within 1/4 mile of fresh water like a pond. Greatest bat house success is documented in areas with a diverse habitat where there is a mix of agriculture and natural vegetation.

Mounts: Bat houses can be mounted to steel poles or wooden posts; mounting to buildings is not recommended in Florida. The house should be at least 12 feet above the ground. Houses can be mounted singly or back to back and should be oriented with the fronts facing either east or west. Avoid mounting the bat house where it will be lit by bright lights at night, and don't mount a bat house to a tree because predators can easily gain access to the bat house and eat the bats.

Protection from Predators: Houses on metal poles provide the best protection from predators but wood posts can be used when combined with metal predator guards. Bat houses should be placed at least 20 to 25 feet from the nearest tree branches, wires or other potential perches for aerial predators.

Avoiding Uninvited Guests: The 3/4-inch roosting spaces greatly reduce the likelihood that wasps or bees will take up residence in the bat house. Paper wasp nests should be removed in late winter or early spring before the wasps become active. Open bottomed bat houses keep birds, mice, squirrels, and other small animals from nesting inside and allows the bat guano to drop to the ground where it can be collected and used to fertilize plants.

Bats make up over 25% of all terrestrial mammals with over 1350 known species. They are among the most endangered animals on Earth, primarily because of human ignorance, superstitious fears, and habitat loss.

But bats are highly beneficial to their environments; worldwide bats are the most important dispersers of seeds and they are pollinators for many plants, including important food crops like cashews and bananas. And bats consume millions of tons of insects every night! The continuing loss of bats holds serious consequences for both the health of the planet and humanity.

You can help conserve Florida's bats by adding a bat house to your landscape. Bat houses provide a safe place for bats to live and rear young, and in return you'll receive nightly insect control without the danger and expense of chemicals.



Bat Belfrys uses field tested designs and materials which encourage bat colonization. Contact us for more information about our bat houses and installation service.

BAT BELFRYS INC

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BAT HOUSE CURB APPEAL



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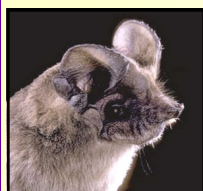
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Bat Basics

There are 13 species of bats which inhabit Florida either permanently or seasonally. Eight of these species are found in Central Florida, and five of them live in social groups known as colonies. They can inhabit man-made structures such as bridges, buildings, and bat houses. Meet these Florida bats:



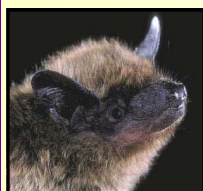
Big brown bat: (*Eptesicus fuscus*) 2" to 3" long, 12" wingspan; long fur can be golden brown, reddish brown or chocolate brown, facial & wing skin is nearly black.



Brazilian free-tailed bat: (*Tadarida brasiliensis*) 2" to 3" long, 12" wingspan; fur is short, usually dark brown; easily identified by their free-hanging tails.



Tri-colored bat: (*Perimyotis subflavus*) 1.5" to 2" long, 8" wingspan; fur may be silver, yellow or light brown; wings are black with pink skin on forearms and face.



Evening Bat: (*Nycticeius humeralis*) 2" to 2.5" long, 11" wingspan; fur can be gold-brown, reddish brown or chocolate brown, facial and wing skin is nearly black.



Southeastern Myotis: (*Myotis austroriparius*) 2" long, 10" wingspan, fur may be brown, gray or red and each strand is typically bi-colored, darker at the base and lighter at the tip.

All of North America's 47 bat species are insectivores with the exception of two small species found in the desert southwest that pollinate cacti.

Florida's bats consume tons of insects every year, with some species eating nearly their own weight in bugs each night. Pregnant or nursing females consume twice as many insects as males and non reproductive females, making them critical for maintaining the natural balance of insects in the environment.

Bats eat moths, mosquitoes, flies, ants, termites, beetles, midges, and just about any insect that ventures out after sunset.

Bats primarily hunt flying insects and eat them in midair, but some species occasionally engage in 'gleaning' insects from leaves, walls or the ground.

Most bats in Florida are also found elsewhere in the United States. Habitat loss has forced bats to take up residence inside buildings, statues, stadiums, gazebos, bridges, and other manmade structures.

Installing a well made bat house in a good location will attract bats to your property without inviting them into your home. Bats provide comprehensive insect control year round in Florida without the expense and hazards of toxic chemicals.



What About Diseases?

Unfortunately many people still mistakenly believe that bats are carriers of rabies, but the fact is that only 0.5% of bats become ill with the disease; recent research indicates that the vast majority of bats are likely immune to the virus and this undoubtedly contributes to the extremely low infection rate. Contrary to common belief, bats contract rabies less often than any other mammal on Earth!

Even so, no one should handle a bat, even if it appears dead, without gloves. Injured or ill wildlife should be contained and a wildlife specialist should be consulted.

Histoplasmosis, a flu-like illness caused by the proliferation of a naturally occurring soil fungus, is erroneously linked to Florida's bats; the fungus isn't present in Florida. Reference the Centers for Disease Controls' website: www.cdc.gov. Use common sense when harvesting guano; always wear gloves and stand upwind when sweeping or shoveling.

Simple precautions that everyone should take with all wildlife include teaching children not to handle or harass wildlife, proper containment of pets, and maintaining rabies vaccines for dogs and cats.