

KEY WORDS:

Chamber: the crevices in a bat house that are formed by the panels that run vertically inside the house. Bat houses will be described by the number of chambers and the number can help determine its size. Ex. A three-chambered bat house.

Roost: the place where a bat lives.

FUN BAT FACTS:

- Bats are the only mammal capable of true flight.
- Bats are in the order Chiroptera. Chiroptera means “hand wing” since their wing structure is similar to our hands.
- Most bats have just one offspring a year. The baby is called a pup.
- Bats have long lives for a small mammal and can live up to 20-30 years.
- Insectivore bats hunt their prey by using echolocation, but they are NOT blind.
- Bats in the Northeast either hibernate in the winter or migrate to warmer temperatures.
- Bats are social animals.

DO'S

- Install houses to face the south.
- Install big houses, especially if installing on poles.
- Keep houses approx. 15-30 ft. away from trees.
- Look for a location in an open space with lots of sunlight.
- Install houses 12 feet high with a clear drop below so bats can fly in and out easily.

DON'TS

- Don't install facing North.
- Don't install small houses on poles.
- Don't install on trees or close to trees.
- Don't install in an area that receives a lot of shade.
- Don't install where obstacle or structures are below the bat house.

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For more details on how to install, build, or buy bat houses visit Bat Conservation International's website at www.batcon.org



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A Guide to Attracting Bats in the Northeast United States



BATS: THE NIGHT SHIFT OF PEST CONTROL.

It's true that bats are a farmer's friend. They provide free pest control by consuming large quantities of insects including major agricultural pests. So when the work of the day on the farm is done, the bats take over from sun down to sun up. And all they ask for is a safe nook to hide during the day and to raise their young to be the next generation of pest control.

Some major agricultural pests bats eat are:

- Stink bugs
- Beetles
- Leafhoppers
- Moths

WHY BATS AND NOT INSECTICIDES?

- Insects won't build resistance to bats like they do to insecticides.
- Bats are opportunistic with prey, if it's there, they'll eat it.
- Insecticides target insects' nervous system and have neurotoxic effects on other animals.
- Insecticides harm beneficial insects and pollinators as well as the targeted pests.
- Insecticides end up in the environment, in the ecosystem, on our food, and in our bodies.

HOW TO ATTRACT BATS:

Install bat houses

Bigger is better! Larger bat houses help keep temperatures stable and constant inside. If installing a bat house on a pole, go for larger bat houses that are at least two feet long from top to bottom and three chambers deep. Bat houses with just one or two chambers may work on buildings, since the building will increase the temperature stability, but generally the bigger the better. Bats will use bat houses to give birth and raise their young so constant temperatures are important. If it's too cool they can go further into the house for warmth, or on very hot days they can hang out lower where there is better air-flow. So installing bat houses that are two feet long or longer can give bats more choice in temperature within the house.

Trees

Trees also attract bats, especially mature trees, snags, and trees with crevices and cavities. Trees with shaggy/exfoliating bark also make great roosting areas for bats. A prime example is the Shagbark hickory. Other mature hickories, maples, and oak make great roosting trees as well.

Research done by Rodale Institute in 2016-2017 showed higher bat activity in agricultural areas near tree lines. Regardless of the commodity being grown, if trees lines bordered the crop, bat activity was higher than the same crop without trees nearby.

Research also showed that bat activity decreased the farther away from tree lines. It showed a 59% decrease in activity from 50 ft away to 150 ft. away from tree lines.

IMPORTANT FACT:

Pregnant female bats form a group and roost together, forming what is called a maternity colony. These colonies can be just a few bats to hundreds of bats. Bats will often use the same area to roost year after year. So by getting bats to roost in bat houses (and caring for them!), you help provide a safe place for the next generation.

In conclusion

Things that attract bats: Trees and Bat houses but not Bat houses on trees.

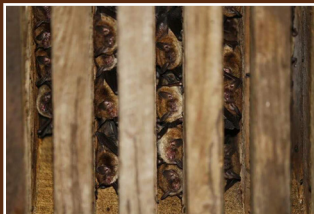


If you build it (right) they will come

In our study, a large 7-chambered house was installed on a sturdy post in an area with regular bat activity and was occupied by bats in only 9 months. This is fast! Don't be discouraged if it takes at least 2 years to get bats. That is normal.



Bats hanging low in a bat house on a hot summer day. Photo: Terry Lobdell



Little brown bats in a 5-chambered house. Photo: Garret Brethauer



Three-chambered bat house installed on a barn. Photo: Reid Wilbraham

ALREADY GOT BATS?

Are you a farmer?

Farmers often find bats roosting in their barns. There are lots of small crevices to roost in and open areas to get in and out of the barn. Some farmers don't mind and even encourage bats to use the area and have installed bat houses both inside and outside the barns. If the guano (bat feces) is a problem try installing houses on the outside of the barn.

Precautionary note: When cleaning up guano always wear proper protection and a respirator.

Not a farmer?

You can help bats too. With threats like white-nose syndrome and habitat loss bats are declining at an unprecedented rate and backyards can provide the same habitat needs. You can also reap the same rewards in pest control!

Be a smart friend to bats and stay hands off. Bats just like any wild animal should not be handled. If you believe a bat is orphaned or injured contact your local wildlife rehabilitator.

TIPS FOR SUCCESS:

Just like prime real estate, location is everything! Bat houses in the Northeast need 6-8 hours of sunlight so preferably install bat houses in open areas facing South, Southwest, or Southeast. West and East can work as well but avoid North.

Avoid areas near trees. The Ideal location is 15 to 30 ft. from trees or other structures that may shade it. Avoid installing the houses on trees. Bat houses on trees show poor success for attracting bats.

Bat houses in the northeast should be painted black or brown. Places in the northern states should be black and areas closer to the Mid-Atlantic should be dark to medium brown. This will help the boxes absorb heat on cooler days.