BAT WATCH: Participate in the BC Bat Count

WHAT: A citizen-science program in B.C. to annually monitor bat roost sites.

WHY: Half the bat species in BC are considered to be of conservation concern. Even the common little brown bat is being proposed for designation as an "endangered" species because of high mortality rates from the disease, White Nose Syndrome. The disease is not yet in BC but is predicted to arrive in the next decade. To be able to effectively manage and conserve bats in the face of the many threats, we need to know how their population numbers are doing year to year. The BC Bat Count will contribute towards gathering this important information.

WHO: Anyone who is interested in collecting valuable information to help monitor our bat populations.

WHERE: A roost site (such as abandoned houses, attic, barns, church steeples, bridges, bat-houses and other structures) on your property or somewhere else.

WHEN: Ideally, participants conduct four bat counts per summer - **two between June 1 and 21** (before pups can fly) and **two more between July 21 and August 15** (when pups are flying and exiting the roost). Doing all four bat counts will allow us to best compare data from year to year and between sites. If it is difficult to do four counts, consider the following options:

- Level 1: ***Bat Reporter*** - 1 count over the summer (between June 1 and 21)
- Level 2: ***Bat Tracker*** - 1 count between June 1 – 21 and one count between July 21 - August 15
- Level 3: ***Bat Enthusiast*** – 2 counts between June 1 – 21 and 2 counts between July 21 – August 15

WHAT TO BRING:

- ✓ A current Bat Count data form (can be downloaded from: www.bcbats.ca)
- ✓ A calendar of sunset and civil twilight for your area (can be downloaded from www.sunrisesunset.com/Canada/)
- ✓ Pen or pencil
- ✓ A tally counter (hand clicker) or piece of paper to tally the number of bats
- ✓ *Optional:*
    - Video camera if you have one. That way you can film the emergence of bats but count them later (and be able to rewind) for more accuracy.
    - Chair or mat to sit on
    - Thermometer. Otherwise try to get the temperature from another source.
    - "DNA Collecting Kit" to collect guano if this is the first time the site is being counted and bats species have not been identified. This kit includes a pair of disposable gloves and a small (e.g. coin) envelope. See "DNA Collecting Protocol for Residents" at www.bcbats.ca

HOW:

- Give your site a name if it doesn't already have one (e.g. "Jenny's garage" or "Sanca Cabin")
- Arrive at your bat roost by sunset. Bats may begin to emerge around sunset and so don't be late! Some species may emerge closer to civil twilight so don't worry if it takes a little while to see the first one.
- Count bats for one hour or until it is too dark to see, whichever comes first.
- The air temperature should be at least 12°C with low wind speed. Some bats will not fly if the weather is too cold, windy or drizzly, and roost emergence counts under non-ideal weather conditions will underestimate population size.
- Sit or stand outside so that the bats' exit point is visible from a comfortable distance. More than one person might be needed if bats are exiting from multiple points. Try to have the light sky behind the bats exit point, to make it easier to count.
- Avoid using a flashlight because some bats may avoid exiting if there is too much light. However, a red filter flashlight is an option if it significantly aids in counting without without disturbing bat emergence (bats do not see well in the red light spectrum).
- Tally the bats as they fly out for their nightly insect-eating. You may wish to use a hand "clicker" to make counting easier, or video the emergence to count later on your screen. Try to consider bats flying back inside but don't worry if there are too many to keep track of. Just count them as they leave if that's the case. Record your observations on the data form.
- Mail or scan and email your data sheet at the end of the summer.
- ***Do not*** enter bat roosts or handle the animals.
- Remember, no data (zero bats) is valuable data too!

Send or email forms to:

BC Ministry of Environment
c/o Aaron Reid, Wildlife Biologist
#401 – 333 Victoria S., Nelson, BC, V1L 4K3
Aaron.reid@gov.bc.ca

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*** Please return forms by August 30 ***

For more information: www.bcbats.ca or 1-855-9BC-BATS