

Okanagan Bat-E-News

Spring is here, which means bats are going to start waking up from their winter hibernacula. Keep an eye out for them as they return to their summer roosts.

Happy reading,

The Okanagan Community Bat Program Team

Email: okanaganbats@gmail.com

Tel. 1-855-922-BATS, ext.13

www.bcbats.ca



Report Dead Bats to 1-855-9BC-BATS



Little Brown Bat with fungal growth, associated with White-Nose Syndrome, on its muzzle. Photo by Larisa Bishop-Boros.

The Okanagan Community Bat Program, in collaboration with the Province of BC, is on the lookout for signs of White-Nose Syndrome (WNS). WNS is a fungal disease harmless to humans but responsible for the deaths of millions of insect-eating bats in eastern North America.

WNS was first detected in Washington State in March 2016. To monitor the spread of this disease, Community Bat Program coordinators have been

collecting reports of unusual winter bat activity across southern BC and ensuring that dead bats are sent to the Canadian Wildlife Health Centre lab for disease testing. To-date, no WNS has been reported in the province.

Spring conditions mean increased bat activity – and an increased chance of detecting the WNS disease. As bats begin to leave hibernacula and return to their summering grounds, our chances of seeing live or dead bats increases, and the Okanagan Community Bat Program is continuing to ask for assistance.

Please call us at 1-855-955-BATS ext. 13 or email us at okanagan@bcbats.ca if you find any dead bats or see any daytime bat activity between now and May. We would like to collect dead bats to test them for WNS.

Currently there are no treatments for White Nose Syndrome. However, mitigating other threats to bat populations and preserving and restoring bat habitat may provide bat populations with the resilience to rebound.

For more information, go to our website.

Three Bat Facts

Bats are neither rodents nor considered pests under BC law. They are classified as wildlife under the BC Wildlife Act and thus are protected from harassment and killing.

Unlike rodents, bats do not build nests and do not chew or claw their way into a structure, but instead take advantage of small structural openings or areas of disrepair on the outside of a building.

Bats are important to our ecosystems and ultimately to our economy. All 14 species of bats living in the Okanagan-Similkameen eat insects and other arthropods, including insects that impact agricultural and forestry resources and disease-spreading pests such as mosquitoes. They do not eat fruit or blood.

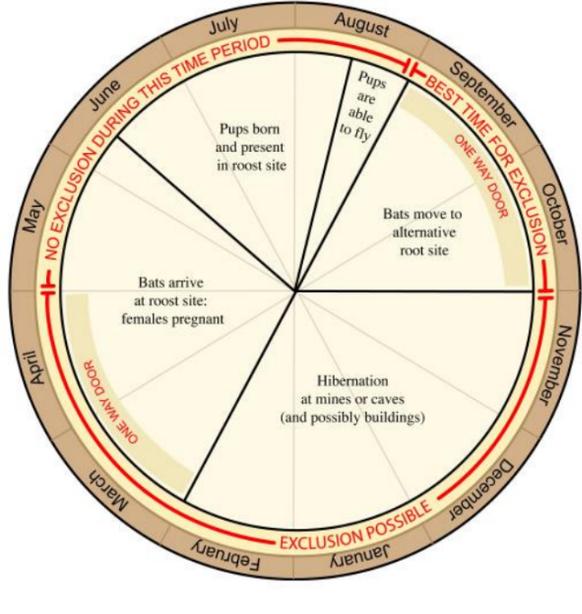
Note to Home Builders and Pest Control Industry: Bats Are Back

Spring is here and the bats are now starting to arrive back at their roost sites. Some of the female bats will be pregnant and either returning to their usual maternity roost or looking for a new roost to raise their young in.

If you cannot leave the bats where they are, and you are doing a bat exclusion from a building, please be sure to install one-way doors, so that bats can leave if they are already in there. One way doors can be used until pups are born which is around the end of April.

There should be no bat exclusions done in May, June, July, or August. This is when the bat pups are born. Please refer to the chart below for more information or contact www.bcbats.ca.

EXCLUSION GUIDELINES FOR BATS IN BC



Interested In Helping With Bat Counts?

The Okanagan Community Bat Program is looking for volunteers to help monitor bat populations. This involves watching and counting bats from dusk until full dark (about 1 hour) during the summer months. It's easy and we will train you! The only requirement is that you have good eye sight for evening counts, and the ability to get yourself to the location where the bat count is occurring.

There are 4 levels of participation:



Bat Enthusiast: participate in 4 summer bat counts in June and July.

Bat Tracker: participate in 2 bat counts, 1 in June and 1 in July.

Bat Reporter: participate in 1 count in June.

If you are interested, please contact Paula Rodriguez de la Vega at okanaganbats@gmail.com or call 1-855-922-2287 ext.13.

Do You Have a Bat House?



Were there any bats in there last summer? How well is your bat house performing?

Please fill in our bat house survey to help us improve recommendations for bat houses in BC. Remember, it is just as important to report bat houses that were not successful in attracting bats as those that were.

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/KLLWZ5J>

We wish to thank Michelle Evelyn from the Sunshine Coast Wildlife Project, who designed and contributed the bat house survey.

Cats and Bats?



Domestic cats can and will capture, and injure or kill bats. We get many calls every year about bats that have been injured or killed by cats. Injured bats often will succumb to their injuries and die from the trauma.

If your cat captures a bat, ensure your cat has up to date rabies vaccinations and contact your veterinarian.

The new trend for cat owners is to keep their cats under control in and out of doors. We strongly support this new way to manage cats. Just like dog owners, cat owners are responsible for their cats actions. Many people are now keeping their cats fenced in or on a leash. Pet stores now carry leashes and specialized fencing and devices to keep cats safely within the yard. Keeping cats indoors at dusk and during the night also prevents them from killing bats.

Visit the Stewardship Centre for British Columbia for more information on how to be a responsible cat owner.

Feral cat populations are a major concern to bats, as well as birds and other small wildlife in the Okanagan. If you see any stray or feral cats, please report them to Alley Cats Alliance, a Registered Charity dedicated to providing rescue, rehabilitation, medical care & adoption to feral and orphaned cats & kittens throughout the Okanagan Valley.

Community Bat Programs of BC

Email: info@bcbats.ca

Web: www.bcbats.ca

Toll free: 1-855-922-2287

Okanagan Region

Email: okanaganbats@gmail.com

Phone: 1-855-922-2287 ext.13

This newsletter was prepared by Paula Rodriguez de la Vega in Penticton, BC. Reviewed by Mike Sarell, Mandy Kellner, and Margaret Holm.



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Photo by Dave Burdett

Newsletter Spotlight

Report dead bats or unusual winter bat sightings to 1-855-9BC-BATS.

Three Bat Facts

Note to Home Builders and Pest Control Industry: Bats are Back

Interested in volunteering to do bat counts this summer?

Do you have a bat box?

Cats and Bats?

Please support BC Bats with a donation to our program.

Every dollar counts.

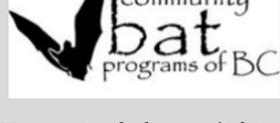


To Donate click here.

Select the BC Bats Project under the organization BC Conservation Foundation. Add a note saying you'd like it to go to the Okanagan.



Follow us on Facebook



We are a network of community bat projects across BC, carried out in partnership with the Ministry of Environment. The goals of this network are to:

- 1) Increase the number of known roost sites in human-made structures
- 2) Encourage landowners to protect their bat roost sites or use bat-friendly exclusion methods and install bat-houses
- 3) Promote the Annual Bat Count to monitor bat populations
- 4) Enhance bat habitat by encouraging the installation and monitoring of bat-houses.

The success of identifying roost sites for species at risk and the enthusiasm of residents to report their bats, conserve their roost sites or consider sensitive methods for removing bats from their homes continues to drive the success of these projects. The activities in each region depend on the level of funding, community partners, and the priorities of the area.

Thanks to our community partners:

Osoyoos Desert Centre

Allan Brooks Nature Centre

Okanagan Similkameen Stewardship Program

Okanagan Similkameen Conservation Alliance

Bats Education and Ecological Protection Society in Peachland

Special thanks to:

BC Conservation Foundation

BC Government

HSP Government of Canada



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