

# BAT WATCH: Participate in the BC Annual 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 now an endangered species because of high mortality rates from the disease, White Nose Syndrome. White Nose Syndrome is not yet in BC but has been confirmed in Washington State and is predicted to be here in the near future. 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 Annual Bat Count will contribute towards gathering this important information. See a summary of the program to-date [here!](#)

**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 11 and August 5** (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** - 2 counts between June 1 – 21
- Level 3: **Bat Enthusiast** – 2 counts between June 1 – 21 and 2 counts between July 11 – August 5

## **WHAT TO BRING:**

- ✓ A current Bat Count data form (can be downloaded from: [www.bcbats.ca](http://www.bcbats.ca))
- ✓ A calendar of sunset and civil twilight for your area (can be downloaded from [www.sunrisesunset.com/Canada/](http://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.
  - Supplies to collect guano if this is the first time the site is being counted and bats species have not been identified. You will need a small paper envelope, and possibly disposable gloves or tweezers. See “DNA Collecting Protocol for Residents” at [www.bcbats.ca](http://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.
- **New!** If possible, have 2 bat counters do 2 independent counts at the SAME EXIT. Our statistical support has requested this, to strengthen the results when analyzing trends. Don't tell each other your results! This will only be possible if you have enough observers, and is not essential.
- 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 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 and do not double-count (subtract the number returning from your total number) 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.
- **New!** Do you have a maternity colony? Record any evidence of pups seen or heard, to confirm this. Also report any dead pups immediately – we are interested in determining cause of death.
- 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!

## **Return forms to your local Community Bat Program Coordinator, or send or email forms to:**

Mandy Kellner, BC Community Bat Program

Box 8625, Revelstoke, BC, V0E 2S2

[bcbats@gmail.com](mailto:bcbats@gmail.com)

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**\* Please return forms by September 15 \***

**For more information: [www.bcbats.ca](http://www.bcbats.ca) or 1-855-9BC-BATS**