

Living with Bats in an Attic

Location: Metchosin Community Hall, Metchosin
Colony size: 1200
Species: Yuma Myotis, Little Brown Myotis

History

When the original 1880's Metchosin Hall burnt down, the current hall was built on the same site and community members enjoyed its grand opening in December 1939.

There is no record of when the bats moved in, but they have clearly roosted in the attic for many years. Since 2011, Metchosin has hosted an annual "bioblitz", where the entire community is invited to participate in wildlife counts and workshops on biodiversity. The event strengthened attitudes about wildlife in the community and the timing was perfect to create a bat information centre at the hall and to promote bat education and conservation.



The Metchosin Hall has provided a secure roost site to hundreds of bats for at least 30 years, and likely longer. Hall Committee member Steve Gray says, "It's great that it's in a public space, as that has prompted the board to get engaged in bat outreach and conservation. "

In October 2018, the Metchosin Hall Society hosted a well-attended Bat Education Day with the Habitat Acquisition Trust to inform the local community about the roost. The event provided all-ages learning opportunities about bats and other local fauna and flora, discussed other examples of leaving bats in-place, and offered bat houses for sale to participants.

Management actions

The insulation on the attic floor is now covered by plastic tarps to collect guano. The tarps only cover part of the floor which ensures any pups that fall from the rafters can crawl to the wall and return to the roost site. Habitat Acquisition Trust works with local volunteers to remove guano each fall.

Contributions to bat conservation and research in BC



Bats access the attic through a vent. The opening is screened to prevent access by larger animals.

Since 2016, Habitat Acquisition Trust has organized BC Annual Bat Count at the site and local volunteers count the number of bats emerging from the roost. The public is invited to join the bat counts or simply enjoy watching the bats emerge. Potluck dinners prior to the counts may become a regular feature, providing an opportunity to discuss approaches to bat conservation.

Visitors will soon be able to observe the bats via a live webcam. This will provide information to researchers about bat ecology, including spring arrival, the timing of pupping and late summer departure dates. This information will help biologists offer regionally-appropriate advice for managing other bats in colonies.