

Living with Bats in an Attic

Location: Visitor Centre, Peachland
Colony size: 2000
Species: Yuma Myotis, Little Brown Myotis



History

The Peachland Historic Schoolhouse, built in 1908, was used as a school until 2002. Vacant for 10 years, the restoration of the historic building in 2012 revealed a large bat colony in the attic. The Peachland Chamber of Commerce and the District of Peachland worked to preserve and protect the bat roost during renovations. The Bat Education and Ecological Protection Society (BEEPS) was created to promote the protection and preservation of bats in Peachland, and to educate the public as a means of achieving these goals.

"The Peachland bats and the Legends of the Lake Interpretive Centre have become a beloved tourism draw that has attracted people locally, regionally, provincially and internationally. It's Peachland's unique selling point. We see over 4,000 visitors a year who want to know about all things bats!" – Jennifer Clute, Tourism Advisor, Peachland Visitor Centre

The Peachland bats are now a popular tourist attraction. From May through August, visitors gather to watch the bats emerge and volunteer with Annual Bat Counts, as well as observe the bats inside the colony via a webcam. At any time of year, visitors can explore educational displays and an interpretive bat walk.

Management actions



The bats use the attic vent to access the roost space, which is completely isolated from the rest of the building

A wooden floor, covered by tarps, was added to the attic to cover the floor trusses. This prevents any pups that fall down from becoming trapped in insulation, and allows safe and easy collection of guano. Tarps are laid flat to ensure any pups that fall from the rafters can crawl to the wall and return to the roost site. The hatch that allows human access to the attic is well-sealed, and no bats, guano, urine, or odours travel down to the lower level of the building. The Peachland Volunteer Fire Crew accesses the roost space each fall to remove guano.

Contributions to bat conservation and research in BC

The Peachland Chamber of Commerce and BEEPS have showcased the bats for tourism and educational purposes. Each year, thousands of people participate in the numerous public educational programs. The colony also supports local research to help biologists offer regionally-appropriate advice for managing bats in other colonies. Temperature monitoring inside the attic has provided information on the roosting conditions used in the Okanagan. The webcam provides information on bat ecology, including spring arrival, late summer departure dates, and the timing of pupping.

"Refurbishing the Peachland Historic School led to an educational program that continuously works towards bat habitat preservation and education, centering around the large maternity colony residing in the attic." – D. Hartford, President of BEEPS