

Living with Bats in Soffits and Bat Boxes

Location: Private home, Saanich
Colony size: 550
Species: Yuma Myotis, Little Brown Myotis



History

The owners moved into this rural Saanich home in 1970. About 10 years later, a storm knocked down an empty barn and they began to notice bats using the soffits on their house. In 2014, after counting more than 300 bats emerge from their house on a summer evening, they decided to accept Habitat Acquisition Trust's offer of bat boxes. One was installed on the house and another was installed in the garden.

Bats began using the boxes almost immediately, but did not abandon the soffits. The owners feel honoured that the bat population has now increased to over 550!

"It's fun to see the bats swooping over the pond at dusk, but the mornings are even better. Some of our visitors set an alarm in order to watch them return. I love to see them circle and fly in under the flashing - we feel special and proud that they have chosen us" - Homeowner

Management actions

"The bats do not harm us in any way. Their presence helps us feel like we are part of the ecosystem. They fuel our curiosity about the natural world." - Homeowner

The owners enjoy the bats so much that the minor irritations are easy to overlook. They've become vigilant about keeping doors and windows closed on summer evenings, to prevent bats from entering their house. If a bat does enter - as mainly happens when they have visitors - they've found ways to help. If the bat happens to land on a plant, they carry the plant outside.

If in a curtain, they open the window and carefully let the curtain fall outside. When the bat is difficult to find, they purposefully leave the door open at dusk and do their best to shoo the bat out.

They haven't been bothered by guano because most of it falls directly into the garden, but bat urine does streak and stain the windows. Their practical approach is to wait until the end of the summer before washing the windows.

The bats use the soffit areas only, which are isolated from the rest of the building

When they needed to redo their roof, the owners waited until after the bats had left at the end of the summer so they wouldn't risk harming them.

Contributions to bat conservation and research in BC

The owners find it fascinating to observe how the bats may switch roost sites and move around their property. They can tell where the majority of bats are roosting by the amount of urine staining a window. The most impacted windows vary from year to year, as do numbers in the bat boxes. Eventually, we may learn more about bat ecology by more closely monitoring the temperature and other factors that may influence the bats' choices.