



Bats in BC

British Columbia is Canada's Bat Bonanza

BC has the highest diversity of bats of any province in Canada, with 15 established species and 3 occasional visitors! This is due, in part, to the wide variety of climates and habitats found across the province – from temperate rainforests, to boreal tundra, to deserts and grasslands. Bats are found all across BC, however the arid Okanagan Valley in the Southern Interior has the highest population density and species diversity. Here are the bat species who live in BC.

Spotted Bat SC
Euderma maculatum



Long-legged Myotis
Myotis volans



Long-eared Myotis
Myotis evotis



Eastern Red Bat ?
Lasiurus borealis



Townsend's Big-eared Bat SC in BC
Corynorhinus townsendii



Northern Myotis E
Myotis septentrionalis



Silver-haired Bat
Lasionycteris noctivagans



Yuma Myotis SC in BC
Myotis yumanensis



Big Brown Bat
Eptesicus fuscus



Fringed Myotis SC in BC
Myotis thysanodes



Pallid Bat T
Antrozous pallidus



Little Brown Myotis E
Myotis lucifugus



Californian Myotis
Myotis californicus



Hoary Bat
Lasiurus cinereus



Western Small-footed Myotis SC in BC
Myotis ciliolabrum



Conservation Status: E = Endangered, T = Threatened, SC = Special Concern, ? = Unknown

Occasional Visitors:

Canyon Bat *Parastrellus hesperus*, **Mexican Free-tailed Bat** *Tadarida brasiliensis*, **Big Free-tailed Bat** *Nyctinomops macrotis*

Did you know?

- The french word for “bat” is “chauve souris” which translates to “bald mouse”. However, bats are more closely related to humans and apes than they are to mice and other rodents!
- Bats are the only mammals capable of true flight. They belong to a group of animals called *Chiroptera*. *Chiroptera* means “hand-wing”. Bat wings are made of skin stretched between their elongated finger bones.
- The bats found in BC all eat insects and other arthropods. Pallid bats are known to eat venomous scorpions and are immune to their stings. Outside of BC, there are bat species who feed on nectar, fruit, mammals, reptiles, amphibians, and fish.
- Bats can eat more than their own body weight of insects in a single night. Mosquitoes are a popular prey. Can you imagine eating a meal that weighs more than you do?



Bat Safety

- White Nose Syndrome is a fungus killing millions of bats across North America. It attacks bats during hibernation and is easily spread. While the fungus isn't a threat to humans, caution should be taken by cave visitors to avoid carrying spores from infected sites to new areas.
- Bats are not especially dangerous, but like other wildlife, they may bite if handled and can carry disease. To avoid harm, do not handle live or dead bats.
- Of the 900+ species of bats in the world, only 3 species feed on blood and these are found in Central and South America.



Bats by Day: Roosting

Bats are *nocturnal*: active at night and rest during the day. The places where bats rest are called *roosts*. Ideal roosting spots keep bats warm and dry, and allow the bats to hang upside-down, clinging to the surface with their back legs. In some species, female bats will roost together in a maternity colony while they raise their pups. The pups remain in the colony until they are able to fly. Roost sites may include spaces under tree bark, tree hollows, rocks, and cliffs. Bats also roost in human-made structures such as attics, barns, sheds, under eaves and bridges, and in purpose-built “bat boxes”.

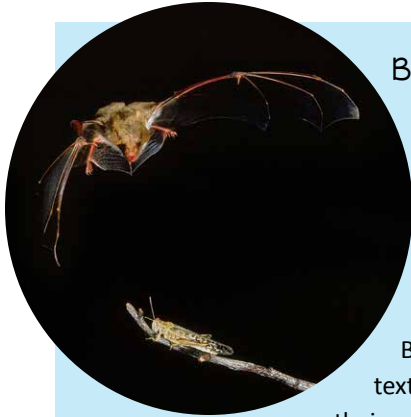


In winter, bats that do not migrate retreat into over-wintering roosts called *hibernacula*. Bats hibernate over the winter in caves, mine shafts, storm sewers and other locations. These tend to be underground, where temperatures remain stable and above freezing. They're extremely sensitive to disturbance when hibernating and should be left alone.

Bats by Night: Hunting by Echolocation

Have you heard the saying “blind as a bat”? It simply isn't true. While some bats have small eyes, none are blind – and many “see” in more ways than we humans do. Insect-eating bats, like those in BC, use a sense called “echolocation” to hunt their prey. It doesn't require any light and it's so effective that bats can snatch a tiny mosquito in midair on the blackest night.

Bats emit a stream of high-frequency calls that are not audible to our ears. When the sound waves created by their calls hit an object, they bounce back towards the bat's sensitive ears. Based on the speed of the echo, a bat can judge distance. They can also detect direction, motion, textures, and other characteristics. These sound reflections enable the bat to create a mental map of their environment. Using this technique, bats catch and consume large quantities of flying insects each night including moths, flies, midges, and mosquitoes. They will also eat spiders, centipedes, scorpions, and other arthropods. Bats play a large role in controlling many insects that humans consider pests.



TRY THIS!

Experience Echolocation!

Try this sound experiment with a friend. Bounce sound waves the way a bat does during echolocation using these simple materials.

Suggested Materials: 1 Aluminum roasting pan, 2 cardboard tubes or rolled up sheets of paper.

1. Position the pan and the tubes on a flat surface with the tubes angled towards the pan
2. Tape the materials in place so that they remain aimed correctly.
3. Have one participant speak or make bat-like clicks into the end of one of the tubes. Have the other participant stand by and listen.
4. Now repeat making the noise into the tube but this time, have the other participant listen at the end of the other tube.

How did it sound to be tuned into the echo bouncing off the pan? Bats rely on the details they receive from these sound wave echoes to sense their surroundings in the dark. They aren't the only ones – whales, dolphins, shrews, some nocturnal birds, and a variety of other species all use echolocation to navigate and find food.



MORE TO EXPLORE

The Community Bat Programs of BC website www.bcbats.ca is a fantastic resource for bats in BC! Learn more about the bats in your area, how to get involved with bat monitoring projects, how to be a good bat neighbour, and much more.

