

Bats in buildings

What to do when bats move in





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Cover: Lea Randall

Why bats are important

Bats are an important part of Yukon's ecosystem.

They eat lots of mosquitos and other insects, helping to control their populations.

Little brown bats (*Myotis lucifugus*) – the most common type of bat in Yukon – are endangered because of human activity. Their greatest threat is a disease called White Nose Syndrome, but habitat loss and destruction of roosts have also contributed to their decline. Bat populations are very slow to recover once they decline, since females only give birth to one young each year. For bats to thrive, they need safe places to roost.

To learn more about bats in Yukon, see the guide to Yukon bats: yukon.ca/en/yukon-bats.

Do you have bats? Let us know!

Signs that you have bats in your building

You may find bats roosting (hanging upside down) on walls, rafters or ceilings, or in chimneys or cracks. You might also see bat droppings (called guano).

Guano looks similar to mouse droppings because it is small and dark in colour. Unlike mouse droppings, guano consists of insect parts and will crumble to the touch.

If you have a large maternity colony (female bats with young) you may see urine stains on walls or large amounts of guano. You may also hear scratching and squeaking noises.

Watch the outside of your home just after sunset to see if bats emerge. If you have bats, you will be able to see them coming and going until sunrise.



Jen Talerico

Night roosts

Bats mostly roost during the day, but they also use night roosts. These are temporary resting spots, where they digest their food and rest.

If you find small amounts of guano without other signs of bat activity, your home is probably being used as a night roost, and the bats will soon move on to another roost.

Report your colony

If you have a colony of bats living in your building or bat house, you can contribute to bat conservation and research by [reporting your colony](#).

About your bats

Will the bats stay?

If you only find one bat or a small group of bats, they are probably using your home as a temporary roost and will likely move on in a few days.

Larger groups of bats (maternity colonies) usually occupy their roosts from April to September and will return to the same roost each year. If you have a colony, you will need to consider long-term options for living with bats or moving them from your home.

Will the colony grow?

Bats reproduce slowly. If you have a colony of bats, the number of bats will not change much over the summer or from year-to-year. Females only have one young each year, so populations do not grow quickly like rodent populations do.

Bat benefits

There are several benefits to living with bats.

Insect control

Bats eat mosquitos and other insects, keeping their populations down. One bat can eat hundreds of mosquitos an hour.

Conservation

Little brown bats are endangered in Canada. Entire colonies can be lost if they are disturbed or moved at the wrong time. Homeowners can help bats by providing them with safe places to roost.

Viewing

Bats are interesting animals to watch as they come and go from their roosts.

Grow better gardens

Guano is an excellent fertilizer and is sold as a garden product in many stores. Guano can be collected and added to soil just like any other fertilizer.

Bat safety

Homeowners are often worried about the risks of living with bats. If you are careful, there is very low risk of contracting a disease from a bat.

Rabies

Bats, like all mammals, can be infected with the rabies virus. To date, there have been no cases of rabid bats in Yukon.

Rabid bats will not usually become aggressive and will not attack people, but if you handle a sick bat it may bite you. Rabies is spread by bites or scratches from infected animals. Avoid touching bats and keep your pets away from them, especially those found outside during the day. Make sure your pets have current rabies vaccinations.

Report any bats that appear sick or injured, or bats found outside during the day, to the Turn in Poachers and Polluters (TIPP) line at 1-800-661-0525.

If you think a bat has bitten you, go to a hospital or health centre and follow medical advice.

Guano

Bat guano is generally no more harmful than the droppings of other animals. In rare cases, people can catch a disease called histoplasmosis by inhaling the dust from bird or bat droppings. The disease usually causes mild or no symptoms, but severe cases need to be treated by a doctor. There have been no reported cases in Yukon or Alaska.

To reduce the risk, use a protective respiratory mask when cleaning large piles of guano. Spray guano with water or a 10 per cent bleach solution to stop particles from becoming airborne when cleaning.



Jen Talerico

What to do when you have bats in your home

If you have a colony of bats in your home, read the following section to learn your options.

Leave bats where they are

This is the best option for bats. Finding a new roost can be difficult and stressful. Young bats that are dependent on their mothers may not survive a move.

Living with bats may also be the best option for you, if evicting bats is too difficult. Many homeowners have successfully lived with bats for years.

You can live safely with bats if the roost is separate from human living areas, so bats do not encounter people or pets. You can do this by sealing off interior areas from the spaces where bats are roosting, such as walls, attics, or chimneys. Install plastic sheeting or troughs to make it easier to collect and clean up guano.

If bats are roosting in an outbuilding (like a shed or barn) separate from your living area, they can be left alone.

Block out the bats

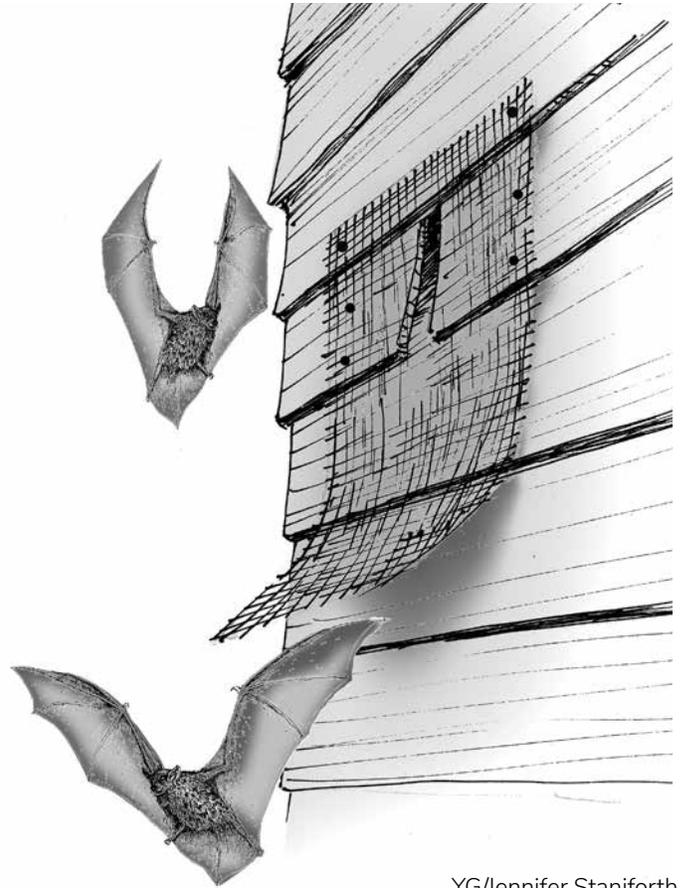
If you cannot separate bats from your living space, or there is too much guano, you may want to block the bats from your building.

You can do this by blocking the bats' entry and exit points, but only at certain times of the year when it is safe, and following the correct methods (see below). Do not completely block entry points when bats are present - you do not want to trap bats in your building.

If you are planning a demolition or major renovation that will affect the roosting area, block out bats beforehand.

How to safely block out bats from your building

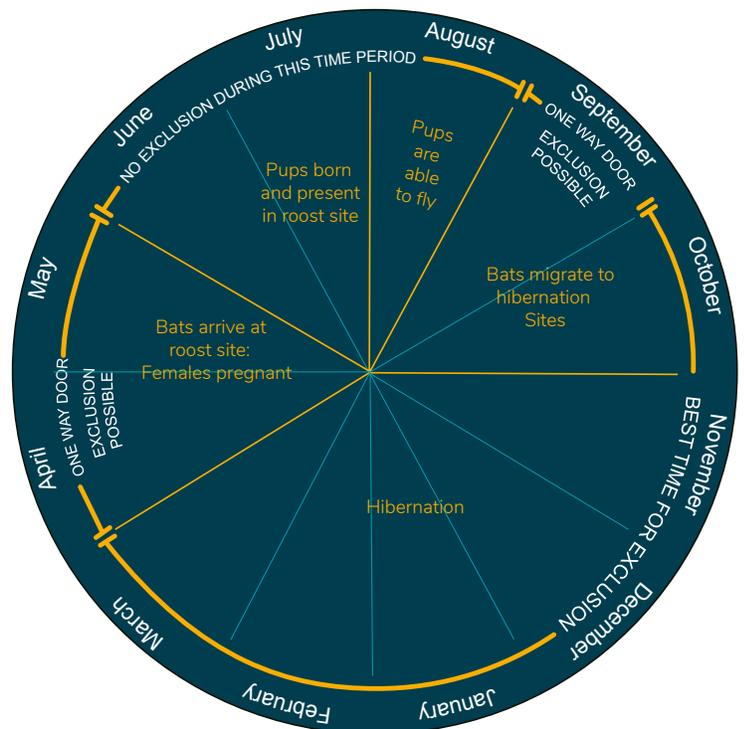
Blocking out bats is most effective when you provide an alternate roost (such as a bat house) beforehand. See the next section for instructions on how to build a bat house.



YG/Jennifer Staniforth

- 1. Identify all points where bats come in and out of your building.** Look for guano or stains on walls from oily fur. You can also watch just after sunset to see where bats are exiting.
- 2. Only exclude bats at the appropriate time of year.** Do not block out a colony during June, July or August: young bats are present and could be killed.
 - a. The best time to block out bats is from September 1 to March 31 when most bats have left for their winter hibernation sites.
 - b. Exclusion is also possible in April and May when bats are present in the roost but young bats have not been born yet. This is not ideal because it is stressful for pregnant bats.
- 3. Excluding during October-March:** Bats will be absent during these times, so you can seal all entry and exit points. Materials you can use to bat-proof a building include caulking, mesh screening, weather stripping, or polyurethane expanding foam. Be thorough. Bats will return in spring and can squeeze through cracks or holes as small as a quarter (about 1.5 cm by 3 cm) in walls, doors, windows and chimneys.
- 4. Excluding during September or April-May:** Some bats may be present in the roost during these times. You need to use one-way exit devices to make sure you do not trap bats inside. Put a one-way sleeve over entry points, which will allow bats to exit but usually prevents them from re-entering. You can attach mesh netting or lightweight plastic sheeting on three sides over the entrance, so bats can crawl out the bottom. You can also encourage bats to leave by hanging strips of Mylar foil or balloons near roost entrances, to interfere with echolocation. Lighting your attic may also encourage bats to leave.

One year bat cycle



Adapted from Community Bat Programs of BC 2016

Provide an alternate roost

Installing a bat house is an excellent way to improve bat habitat in your yard. Bats may choose to roost there instead of in your home.

If you plan to block out bats from your home, install a bat house before, so they have somewhere to move.

Where to get a bat house

Pre-made bat houses

You can purchase pre-made bat houses online (canadianbathouses.com) or from a local woodworker. Bats like to roost in warm places, so you may need to modify the bat house to make it comfortable for bats in Yukon's cool climate. Paint the bat house black to absorb sunlight. Be sure to purchase a house that is multi-chambered, fully caulked and unvented.

Build your own bat house

If you enjoy do-it-yourself projects, the best option may be to build your own Yukon-specific bat house. You can download step-by-step instructions on [how to build a Yukon bat house](#).

Location

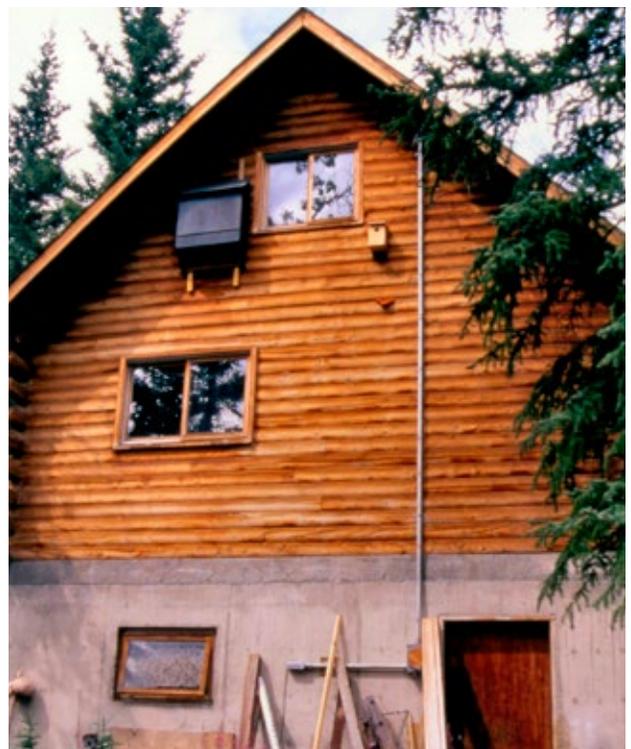
Bat houses need lots of sunshine to keep the bats warm. It is best to place your bat house on a high, south-facing wall. The next best option is to mount your bat house on a pole. If you do this, put it in an open, sunny area that is sheltered from strong winds and not too close to trees.

Bat houses should be at least 3 metres off the ground. Never place your bat house on a tree: it will get less sun, and bats will be vulnerable to predators like cats and squirrels.

Learn how to [install a bat house](#).

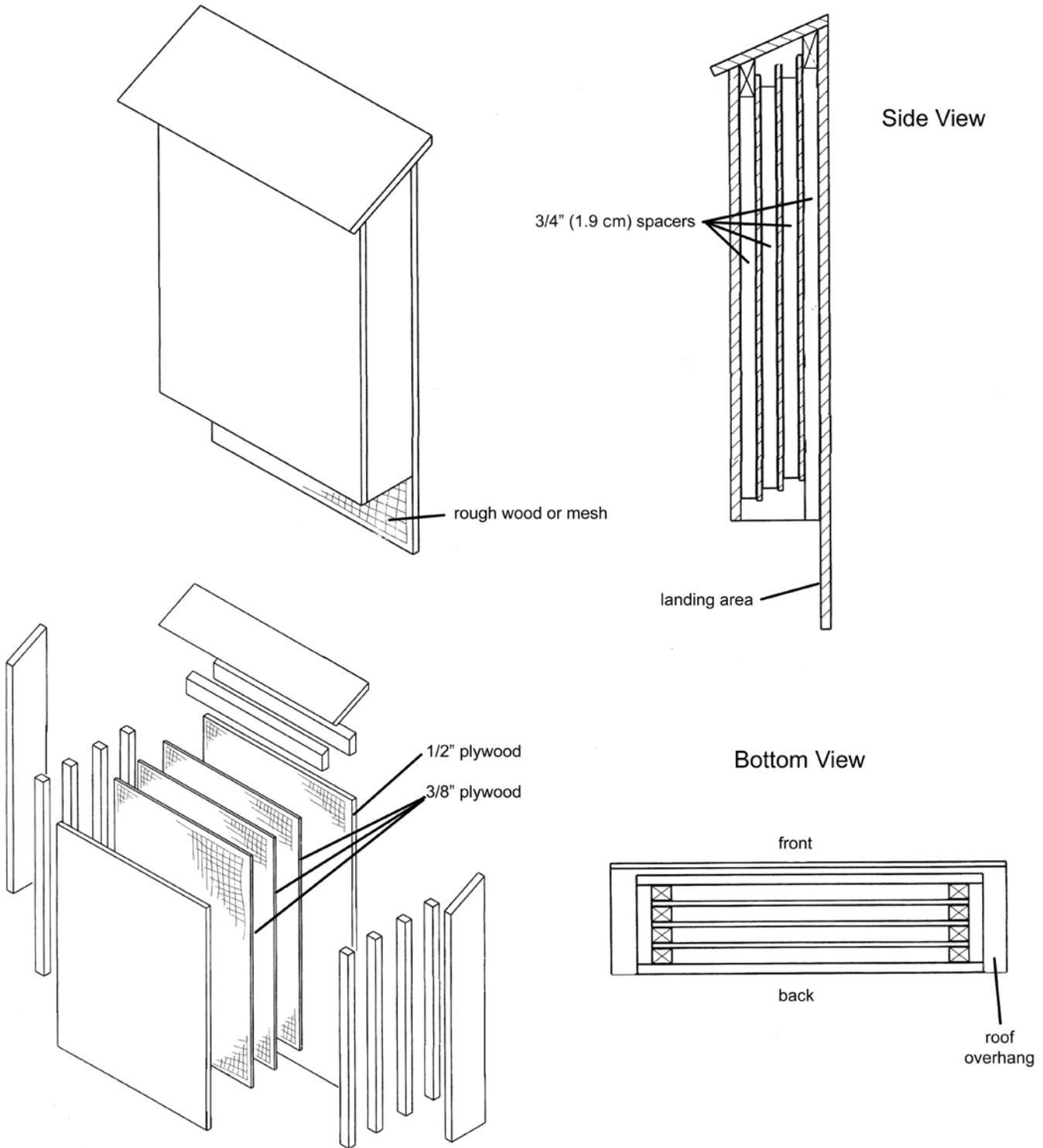


YG/Scott Cameron



Brian Slough

Yukon Bat Nursery House



Go to Yukon.ca for full instructions.

YG



R. Eldridge

Attracting bats

There is no proven way to attract bats to a bat house. You may need to be patient: it could take one or two years for bats to discover your bat house. Proper construction and placement will increase your chances of success. If your bat house remains unoccupied after two years, consider moving it to a new location.

Stuck or injured bats

Injured bats

If you find a live bat clinging to a wall or tree outdoors, leave it alone – it is probably fine and will move on its own.

If you think the bat is sick or injured, or if you find a dead bat, report it to the Turn in Poachers and Polluters (TIPP) line at 1-800-661-0525. Do not touch the bat.

If you find an injured bat indoors, move it outside. Put on thick gloves and trap the bat in a pillowcase. Then, pin the pillowcase to a wall or tree with the open end up so the bat can climb out.

Bats stuck inside

If a bat flies into your living area, turn off the lights and open the doors and windows. The bat should find its way out. The bat will not land in your hair—this is a myth.

Contact

If you have additional questions, contact the Department of Environment at 867-667-5652.