

Bats



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Bats are often found in urban landscapes. The two most common species in Wisconsin are the little brown bat and the big brown bat, and both can be found roosting in buildings and bat houses in summer. These are the most likely species to come in contact with people and pets. These species form colonies and have their babies in warm sites such as attics, barns and bat houses. Bats in Wisconsin are insectivores and can eat their body weight in insects each night. They will not chew their way into buildings, but may exploit holes created by squirrels or woodpeckers. Though uncommon, bats can carry rabies, so avoid any contact whenever possible.

Encountering Bats

- If you find a bat in a building, close the door or window to the outside. Allow the bat time to leave the building on its own.
- If the bat does not leave by itself, wait for the bat to tire and land. Wear thick gloves and cover the bat with a box and slide paper or cardboard behind it trapping it in the box. Then release it outside by placing the box at the base of a tree or somewhere with cover. Don't throw bats into the air.
- If bat contact with people or pets is suspected or confirmed, safely capture the bat alive in a box and contact your county health department for next steps. Killing the bat yourself could make it untestable, so try to safely capture and keep it alive.
- If you observe a sick bat on the ground, do not pick it up. You can use a shovel or box to move it to a protected area. Always use gloves. If you observe a sick or dead bat, please submit a report to the Wisconsin Bat Program: wiatri.net/Inventory/Bats/Report/

Protect Your Pet

- Bats can carry rabies, so keep your pet's vaccinations up-to-date.
- Always supervise pets when outdoors, as cats can capture and eat bats.

Discourage Bats

- Keep buildings bat-proof by securing access to holes, broken trim or framing and chimneys with appropriate materials (hardware cloth, caulk, wood etc.). Never seal a building that may have bats residing in it.
- If bats have already taken up residence in your building, exclusion is the only option to have them removed. This allows the bats to leave but not re-enter through the use of one-ways doors. Relocation of bats does not work as they have a very good homing ability. Killing bats is both illegal and does not solve the underlying problem of bat access into the building. Info on bat exclusion can be found at dnr.wi.gov, keyword "bats". Exclusion is not permitted from June 1–August 15 every year except for human health reasons, to protect flightless young in the roost.



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Quick Facts

- Wisconsin has seven species of bats, four of which hibernate September–April and three of which migrate south for the winter. The four hibernating species are listed as state-threatened.
- Bats are beneficial to have around because they eat many different insects, including mosquitoes.
- You can safely encourage bats to your area by installing a bat house! visit dnr.wi.gov keyword "bats" for information.
- When juveniles start learning to fly, they often find themselves in the wrong place, and in July and August many people report bats in their living spaces. Allow these bats to leave on their own if no contact with people or pets has occurred.
- When bats are migrating from summer to winter habitat, they will often roost solitarily on buildings for several days at a time. The best thing to do is leave these animals alone unless they may come in contact with people.

For more information, visit our webpage:
dnr.wi.gov

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Urban Wildlife Factsheet: Bats