

## VOLUME 22, NO. 2 Summer 2004

### Members in Action

#### New Homes for Bats at a Canadian Bridge

Vivian Birch-Jones

When a plan to refurbish the historic bridge over the Fraser River at Lillooet, British Columbia, was announced, I immediately thought of adding some bat houses to the project. This was, after all, an ideal site: Bats had quickly moved into a small bat house that was installed downriver the previous summer. The Lillooet Naturalist Society supported the idea, so I took it to the Village Council, which approved it – as long as the society paid the extra costs. Always an optimist, I committed to that without a pause.

As a member of Bat Conservation International, I turned to BCI for help in overcoming the skepticism of the bridge engineer. Those concerns disappeared after consultations by phone and email with BCI Science Officer Barbara French and Bat House Project Coordinator Mark Kiser. When the request for bids was published in the local newspaper, ‘installing bat houses’ was included in the specifications.

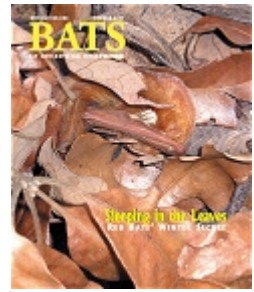
Lillooet has eight confirmed species of bats, and five of them – western small-footed myotis (*Myotis ciliolabrum*), northern myotis (*Myotis septentrionalis*), fringed myotis (*Myotis thysanodes*), spotted bat (*Euderma maculatum*) and pallid bat (*Antrozous pallidus*) – are listed by British Columbia as endangered, threatened or at risk. This project is providing new roosting options that help mitigate the loss of habitat due to development and timber harvesting.

Relatively little is known about our local bats, but interest in them has certainly grown as our project provided wonderful public relations for bats, as well as opportunities for discussion and education. Since one of the biggest challenges in bat conservation is a general lack of knowledge, this project is already a success.

Bat Conservation International and the Federation of B.C. Naturalists assisted the Lillooet Lions Club in building the bat houses and provided an educational sign that celebrates the bats and those who helped them.

Now we look forward to watching the evening sky at the old bridge as summer approaches. We’ll see how long it takes our amazing flying friends to discover this new site. That will be the final bat measure of success.

VIVIAN BIRCH-JONES is a member of Bat Conservation International and president of the Lillooet Naturalist Society.



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All articles in this issue:

- ▶ [Banishing the Vampires of the Jungle](#)
- ▶ [Wind Energy & the Threat to Bats](#)
- ▶ [Hibernation: Red Bats do it in the Dirt](#)
- ▶ [Forest Bats in the Timberlands](#)
- ▶ [Dueling in the Dark](#)
- ▶ [Amazing Diversity](#)
- ▶ [Members in Action](#)

