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A New Kind of Bat House

Bat Conservation International has for several years been developing and testing a new generation of artificial bat roosts. These new roosts are designed specifically for forest-dwelling bats that historically required extra-large hollows found only in ancient trees.



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Solving the roosting needs of these bats is urgent. As North America's old-growth forests were harvested, many of them more than a century ago, bats that relied on big tree hollows lost their homes. Those that survived often moved into the empty rooms of abandoned cabins. Now even these are disappearing as the aging and often abandoned structures collapse or are torn down. With few alternatives available, new solutions are critical.

Experimental roosts made of concrete culverts are already attracting bats, but their use is limited by the high cost of transporting and erecting these extremely heavy sections. A solution is now being tested in Kentucky's Mammoth Cave National Park, where one of the state's few remaining nursery colonies of Rafinesque's big-eared bats (*Corynorhinus rafinesquii*) will soon be evicted from an old building. When that happens, the bats will find the first-ever cinder-block roosts.

Designed by BCI and paid for with contributions from BCI member Paxson Offield, these experimental roosts are much less expensive to build. Another pair of cinder-block roosts is planned at Saint Catherine Creek National Wildlife Refuge in Mississippi, again thanks to Offield's generosity and a grant from the U.S. Bureau of Land Management through the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation.

If successful, this new approach could provide desperately needed roosts for some of America's most threatened forest bats.

To help support this important, continuing research, please contact Mark Kiser at mkiser@batcon.org or (512) 327-9721.

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