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BCI Launches North American Bat House Research Project
Volunteer Research Associates Needed

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Putting up bat houses and making careful observations offers an excellent opportunity to learn more about bat roosting preferences and requirements. To encourage experimentation, BCI is establishing the North American Bat House Research Project. We invite bat house enthusiasts throughout the United States and Canada to make an important contribution to our understanding of bat roosting behavior by participating as active volunteer Research Associates in this long-term project.

Even the most abundant bats of North America are rapidly losing roosting habitat. Although we know that at least six species are using bat houses, we need much more information before we can consistently accommodate even these bats' needs. High priorities include learning more about preferred roost chamber dimensions for individual species and the effect of insulation and solar heating under various climatic conditions.

The amount of time each volunteer needs to commit will range from minimal to as much as you care to devote to the project. From spring to fall, depending on your area, you will be asked to make regular monthly inspections of your bat houses. In addition, it will be critical that you complete and return a simple two-page initial data report to BCI for each house erected and then a status follow-up at the end of every season.

Participants will receive a copy of BCI's new *Bat House Builder's Handbook*, which contains detailed plans for building various types of houses. You will also receive complete instructions on how to begin conducting the experiments most needed in your area along with report forms. The most significant data on temperature preferences will result from erecting groups of at least two or three houses, but those who can erect only one house will also contribute valuable information about the incidence of occupancy in a single house versus providing multiple roost choices. Individuals unable to build their own bat houses may still participate by purchasing them from the BCI catalogue. We strongly encourage those who have unoccupied bat houses to participate by moving their houses or making other appropriate changes and reporting conditions before and after. When data report forms are returned to BCI at the end of the first season, experimenters will receive a personalized Research Associate certificate.

Participants will receive special spring and fall reports on bat house research progress and will also be able to use this forum to share their experiences and exchange ideas with other project experimenters. Those who successfully attract bats (or who already have done so) *and* complete and return the data forms, will be eligible to compete for grants to conduct further experiments. In addition, Exceptional Achievement Awards will be made to those who contribute most to new knowledge.

The resources required to mount a national species-specific study of bat roosting needs are truly formidable. To help establish a special project fund, each BCI member who would like to become an active volunteer in the project will be asked to contribute \$10 annually

beyond their regular membership. Non-BCI members may also participate for \$15 annually (those who additionally wish to join BCI may do so at a special rate of \$25). The project fund will support the costs of phone and mail consultation with participants, and data gathering and analysis. It will also support small grants and awards to encourage successful participants to expand their research.

Participation as a Research Associate in BCI's North American Bat House Research Project offers a unique opportunity to help your own backyard bats while sharing in the excitement and satisfaction of scientific discovery.

Your participation can yield important information. Please fill out the application included in this issue and return it to BCI, North American Bat House Research Project, P.O. Box 162603, Austin, Texas 78716. Or for more information, call BCI at 512-327-9721 and ask for the Bat House Project Coordinator.



Erecting bat houses and participating in BCI's ongoing research into the roosting preferences of North American bats offers a unique opportunity to share in scientific discovery.

All articles in this issue:

- ▶ [ON THE COVER](#)
- ▶ [BAT HOUSES: THE SECRETS OF SUCCESS](#)
- ▶ [The Bat House Study](#)
- ▶ [Bat Houses as Alternative Roosts](#)
- ▶ [BCI Launches North American Bat House Research Project](#)
- ▶ [Designing Better Bat Houses](#)
- ▶ [Creating New Bat Roosting Habitat](#)
- ▶ [Bats: A Farmer's Best Friend](#)
- ▶ [Bats, Beetles, and Bugs](#)
- ▶ [In search of a home](#)