

Facts on the Fly!



DEALING WITH UNWANTED GUESTS

For more detailed info on exclusion techniques you can do yourself visit this page on the BCI web site:
<http://www.batcon.org/buildings.html>.

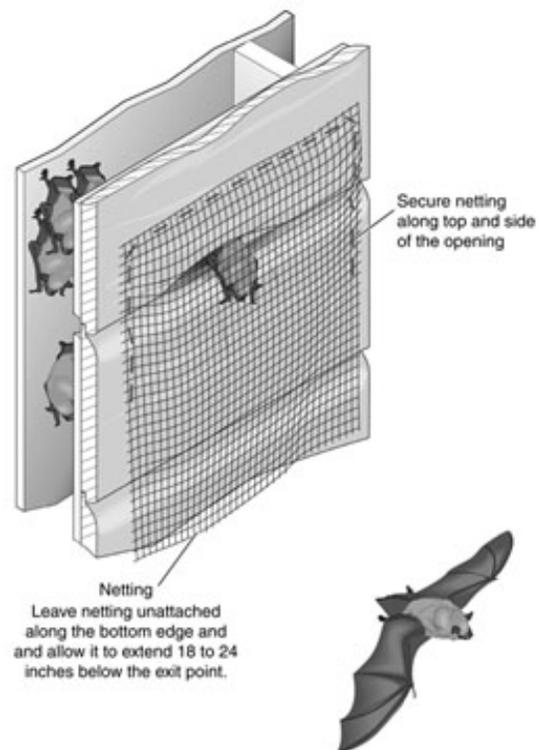
Have you encountered a stray bat flying around in your house? Bats that fly into human living quarters are usually lost youngsters whose primary goal is a safe escape. They often will leave on their own if a window or door to the outside is opened while others leading to the rest of the house are closed. Bats are not aggressive, even if chased, but may bite if grabbed. As with any wild animal, bats should not be handled with bare hands. An exit can be hastened by catching the bat in flight with a hand net (swung from behind), or when the bat lands, covering it with a coffee can and slipping a piece of cardboard over the opening, and then simply releasing it outside. Or you may also catch it by hand, using leather work gloves to avoid being bitten.

Excluding a Colony from Your House

Bats can be excluded from living quarters by covering chimneys and vents with half-inch hardware cloth screens, by installing draft guards beneath doors, and by sealing any other possible access routes, especially around screen doors, windows and plumbing. Bats potentially can enter holes as small as 3/4" in diameter or 3/8" by 7/8". They do not chew insulation or otherwise make new holes. Their entries can be plugged with silicone caulking, steel wool, or temporarily even with tape. If a large bat colony must be evicted from a wall or attic, careful observations should be made at dusk to find entry holes (also sometimes recognizable by stains around used holes or crevices or by droppings beneath). The bats must emerge each summer evening to feed. Once roost entrances have been located, the bats can be excluded, though this should not be attempted when flightless young may be present (anytime from May through August in the U.S.). Starved young could create a serious odor problem, not to mention needless cruelty.

Most bat species leave in winter, permitting exclusion in their absence. However, some bats hibernate in buildings. When this is the case, or when one does not wish to wait for winter, there is a relatively simple exclusion technique that can be used after young are flying but prior to the winter months. Inexpensive light-weight polypropylene

netting* with a mesh-size of 1/6" or smaller is preferred, can be obtained in quantity to cover areas of nearly any size. It can be hung during daylight hours above areas where bats emerge, using duct tape or staples. A strip of netting at least two feet wide, hung one to two inches in front of bat exit holes, and extending at least two feet below and to the side of exit points (see illustration), will allow the



bats to emerge, but later they will be unable to find their way back. Thus the netting acts as a simple one-way excluder until repairs can make the exclusion permanent. A sheet of clear, heavy-weight plastic (available at any hardware store) will have the same affect. The netting (or plastic) should be left in place for 5 to 7 days to assure that all bats have left the roost.

* Netting available from: **Internet: (800) 328-8456** (request 1/6" mesh size, order #ov-7100).

Other Methods

BCI does not condone the use of traps for removing bats from buildings.

Harmless repellent devices would seem ideal, but none are known to be effective. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency once fined a Chicago manufacturer \$45,000 for misleading claims involving an ultrasonic device. All ultrasonic sound generators thus far tested by reliable bat experts have proven ineffective and some may endanger people or even attract bats.

Naphthalene flakes (moth balls) are no more effective. Their primary usefulness is in generating repeat business for the pest control industry. To be at all effective, they must evaporate rapidly, requiring frequent replacement.

Aerosol dog and cat repellents may discourage bat use of a particular roosting spot for periods of up to several months. They have been used effectively to prevent bats from night-roosting above porches. The spray is applied by day when bats are not present. Aerosol repellents are not an adequate substitute for exclusion in the case of day roosts and never should be applied when bats are in a roost. In many cases, suspending 2" wide by 7-10" long strips of aluminum foil or helium-filled Mylar balloons at a roost will deter bats.

Professional Bat Excluders:

For a list of reliable pest control operators in your area, visit the Bats and Buildings page at www.batcon.org or contact the "Bats in Buildings" coordinator at batsinbuildings@flybynightinc.org or call 407-324-0647 and ask for Laura Finn.

Poisons used against bats pose serious health hazards to humans and are not effective in eliminating bat colonies. For this reason, there are currently no poisons or chemicals licenced for use against bats. Furthermore, it is a direct violation of federal law to use a chemical in any way other than that which it is strictly intended. In most cases, the only safe, permanent solution is exclusion.

Do Bats Present a Disease Risk?

Like most mammals, an occasional bat may contract rabies, but even those that do are typically non-aggressive, biting only in self-defense if handled. According to the U.S. Center for Communicable Disease guidelines, a rabies exposure requires a bite or contact with an open wound or mucous membranes (eyes, nose, or mouth) with a rabid animal's saliva or nervous tissue. Transmission from an animal to a human through the air has never been recorded outdoors or in buildings, though there are two cases which occurred under extremely unique conditions inside caves. There is no evidence of transmission through contact with urine or feces. Thus the odds of being harmed by a bat are extremely remote for those who simply do not handle them. If bitten, a safe and painless vaccine is available.

A fungal disease with flu-like symptoms, called histoplasmosis, can be contracted from breathing dust stirred up from either bird or bat droppings. It is uncommon in attics and can be avoided by simply not inhaling dust from droppings. Those removing large accumulations of droppings should always use a properly fitted dust respirator capable of filtering particles as small as two microns in diameter.

There are no records of disease transmission to humans or pets from bat parasites. These strongly prefer their bat hosts and seldom bite other animals.

Join Bat Conservation International – Our members and donors make our conservation successes possible.

Bat Conservation International (BCI) is a non-profit organization dedicated to conservation, education, and research initiatives involving bats and the ecosystems they serve. For more information visit: www.batcon.org