

Okanagan Community Bat Program

Helping people and saving bats

Okanagan Bat-E-News

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White Nose Syndrome Update

Thank you to all of you who have reported and assisted with the collection of dead bats. To date, White Nose Syndrome has not been detected in the province.

WNS is a fungal disease harmless to humans but responsible for the deaths of millions of insect-eating bats in eastern North America. WNS was first detected in Washington State in March 2016. To monitor the spread of this disease, Community Bat Program coordinators have been collecting reports of unusual winter bat activity across southern BC and ensuring that dead bats are sent to the Canadian Wildlife Health Centre lab for disease testing.



Please report dead bats between November 1 and May 31st.

If multiple bats die at one site, report it year-round.

1-855-922-2287

Help Bats, Join Batch Watch June 1-21

Bat Watch is a citizen-science program organized by our network of Community Bat Programs in BC. Anyone who is interested in bats can help us monitor bat populations. It's easy and fun. All you have to do is sit outside a bat roost at sunset with a nice drink, a pen and a piece of paper (or a clicker counter), and count bats for an hour as they emerge for the evening.

If you have a bat box or bats roosting in one of your buildings, then you already have your roost site. If you don't have a bat roost, please contact us and we will put you in touch with a bat count. If you have a bat roost but need help counting the bats, please contact us and we will send some volunteers your way!



Some of our valued volunteers at bat counts last summer.

Half of the 15 species of bats in the Okanagan are considered to be of conservation concern. Even the common little brown bat is now an endangered species because of high mortality rates from the disease, White-nose Syndrome. White-nose Syndrome is not yet in BC, but has been confirmed in Washington State and is predicted to be here in the near future.

To be able to effectively manage and conserve bats in the face of the many threats, we need to know how their population numbers are doing year to year. The BC Annual Bat Count will contribute towards gathering this important information.

The first bat count window is between June 1 and 21st, and

the second one is July 11–Aug. 5th. We recommend that you do at least 2 counts at each roost during this time frame. If you can only do two, choose dates between June 1 and 21st.

Upcoming Bat Counts where volunteers can help:

- ◆ Vernon—Burgess Colony— June 1, June 8th. Contact okanaganbats@gmail.com
- ◆ Kelowna—Bertram Creek Regional Park—TBD. Contact okanaganbats@gmail.com
- ◆ BC Parks Locations (Okanagan Lake Provincial Park South Campground, Fintry Provincial Park, and Sun Oka Provincial Park). Contact Sara.Bunge@gov.bc.ca.
- ◆ Peachland Visitor Centre—June 1, June 15, July 1, July 20, August 3. Contact info@beepspeachland.com

For more information, go to <http://www.bcbats.ca/index.php/get-involved/participate-in-the-bc-bat-count> or contact us: okanaganbats@gmail.com.

Newsletter Spotlight

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a donation to our program.*

Every dollar counts.

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Select the BC Bats Project
under the organization
BC Conservation Foundation.
Add a note saying you'd like it
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Community Bat Programs of BC

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Feature Story

Living With a Colony of Bats

By Lisa Lauzon, with some help from my Mom - Gay Burgess

As long as I can remember, my parents home has had bats in the attic. My mom was born and raised on the land they live on today. The house was built around 1920 on a property 18 km south of Vernon, where my Great Grandfather, Grandfather and Uncles quarried granite and my Grandmother cooked for the quarry crews.



Lisa Lauzon (right), with parents Sandy and Gay Burgess and long time friend Kathy McKay.

By 1936, they moved the family into town to have access to schools, leaving the homestead vacant most of the year. In summer, the quarry was kept up and the family would move back out to the old house. It was then that a colony of bats was discovered. My Grandparents knew the benefits of having a colony of bats near by, but am sure, in the beginning, were a bit horrified! Knowing my Grandfather as I did, I would venture to guess, that he never 'really' tried to get rid of them at all, or they would have been gone!

My mom has fond memories of her and her brother sneaking up to the attic with blankets and fir boughs, covering up with the blankets and swooshing the fir boughs all around to rile the bats up and listen to the commotion! My Grandfather soon put a stop to that!

In 1955, my parents moved to Richmond and visited Vernon every summer. Around 1968, we renovated the interior but still had no power, no telephones and no indoor plumbing. There was a single stand pipe into the kitchen area for water, pumped up to a tank from the lake. It was the best!

There were hardly ever any mosquitoes around, and I would recall other people tell tale of their vacations, and talk about the terrible year for bugs and mosquitoes they had. In questioning my Mom on this, she nonchalantly answered, "It's because we have bats."



Little Brown Myotis (*Myotis lucifugus*)

When that computed in my head. "WE?" I questioned her again.

And she very calmly replied, "They live in the attic."

I'm quite sure I replied with a terrified, "WHAT??? IN the attic. In *our* attic ??"

Eventually, I got used to the idea and was very grateful for them keeping the bug population down. I remember, as I became older and was allowed to have friends in summer, I would show them the bats. I would usually get an "Ew",

or the odd "Wow that's cool".

At first, I'm not even sure if we had screens on the windows. In the heat of the Okanagan summer evenings, we would have all the windows open and would read our comic books by candle light or lantern, with the odd bat flying around over top of our heads inside. They eventually found their way out. I had friends who never got used to them being inside. They would promptly put a towel over their head and go outside until said bat would vacate the house. I didn't tell them that in the darkness, outside, the bats were by the hundreds and probably flying a heck of a lot closer to them than in our kitchen!

People worry about the amount of guano that might be in the attic. We collect it as it is the most amazing fertilizer for the gardens and flower beds.

My parents eventually put a brand new roof and insulation on the old place, renovated it and moved in by 1987. My parents are still in excellent health at 84 and 90 years of age!!

In the end, the benefits the bats provide far outweigh any inconveniences of having them live in such close proximity. We love our little colony of around 600 - 700 bats!



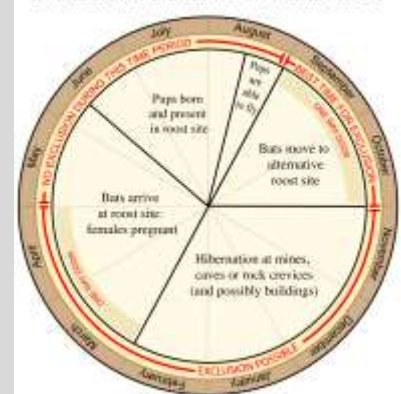
The Burgess Family co-exists with a maternity colony of about 600 to 700 Little Brown Bats who roost in the attic.

Got Bats In Your Attic?

Bats are neither rodents nor considered pests under BC Law. They are classified as wildlife under the BC Wildlife Act and are protected from harassment and killing.

Do you have bats in your attic or roosting in one of your buildings? Please contact us for a copy of 'A BC Guide for Managing Bats in Buildings'. We can help you assess the situation and figure out what your options are. Guidelines state that there should be no exclusions or evictions of bats between May 1 to August 30th as this is a critical time for bat pups. However, you can start by assessing the situation, figuring out where the entry and exit points are, and planning whether you want to enhance their habitat or exclude them from your building.

EXCLUSION GUIDELINES FOR BATS IN BC



There are many examples of people co-existing with bats in BC. One prime example is the large maternity colony of Yuma Bats and Little Brown Myotis roosting in the attic of the [Peachland Visitor Centre](#). We highly recommend you pay them a visit!

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Upcoming Bat Presentations

Join us during the Meadowlark Festival.

- ✓ May 17th, 6:00pm to 9:30pm, Go Batty in Peachland.
- ✓ May 18th, 7:30pm to 10:00pm, Bats of the South Okanagan, at Vaseux Lake.
Spaces limited, please register at www.meadowlarkfestival.ca.

Yorkton Stewardship Event

Thanks to funding from the South Okanagan Conservation Fund and Habitat Conservation Trust Fund, and a partnership with Okanagan Similkameen Stewardship, we will be organizing a bat community stewardship event in the Yorkton Avenue area in Penticton. If you live in that neighborhood, next to the Okanagan River and its oxbows, we invite you to join us on June 8th at 7:30pm for a bat presentation and bat count. Please email us at okanaganbats@gmail.com for more information.



Calling Pest Management Companies

Bats are considered wildlife under the BC Wildlife Act, not pests. Yet pest management companies often receive complaints from homeowners who have bats. Thanks to a partnership with the Okanagan Similkameen Conservation Alliance, we have received funding from the South Okanagan Conservation Fund to update pest management companies with our recent bat management guidelines. Thank you SOCF!

Wanted:

Participants with Occupied Bat Houses

There are growing reports of significant pup mortality at bat houses during heat waves in the southern interior region of the province. Bat houses are increasingly used as a bat conservation tool, and as part of a successful exclusion from a building. Some bat houses in the Okanagan and other places may be too hot and may become death traps for non-flying pups.

Bat biologist Tanya Luszc is coordinating a study of bat house temperatures. The purpose of the project is to improve bat conservation in British Columbia, by determining optimal bat house designs and locations for maternity colonies in the Okanagan region.

Do you live in the South Okanagan and have a bat house that was occupied last summer? Tanya is looking for bat houses to be part of her study. If you would like to participate, please contact her at tluszc@yahoo.com.

Wanted: Bats roosting in window shades or shutters

If you have bats roosting in your outdoor window roll-up shades or shutters, we would like to hear about it. It seems this is fairly common in the South Okanagan. We are trying to identify the name brands and suppliers of shades, so we can approach them and address the problem. Thanks to the South Okanagan Conservation Fund for making this outreach possible.

Please email the Okanagan Community Bat Program at okanaganbats@gmail.com.



Thanks to our community partners:

[Allan Brooks Nature Centre](#)

[Bats Education and Ecological Protection Society](#) in Peachland.

[Okanagan Similkameen Conservation Alliance](#)

[Okanagan Similkameen Stewardship Society](#)

[Osoyoos Desert Centre](#)

Thank you to our many valued volunteers:



Thanks to our funders:

BC Government

HSP Government of Canada



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To remove your name from our mailing list, please email okanaganbats@gmail.com.