

# Guidelines for Locating Your Bat House

**Sun Exposure** - At least six hours of direct sun is recommended for all bat houses in Florida.

**Habitat** - Location should be within 1/4 mile of a stream, river or pond. Greatest bat-house success has been achieved in areas of diverse habitat, especially where there is a mixture of varied agricultural use and natural vegetation.

**Mounting** - Bat houses should be mounted on buildings or poles. Houses mounted on trees or metal siding are seldom used. Mounting two bat houses back-to-back on poles, with one facing east and the other facing west, is ideal. All bat houses should be mounted at least 12 feet above ground and 15 to 20 feet high is better. Bat houses should not be lit by bright lights.

**Protection from Predators** - Houses mounted on the sides of buildings or on metal poles provide the best protection from predators. Metal predator guards may be helpful on wooden poles. Bat houses should be placed at least 20 to 25 feet from the nearest tree branches, wires or other potential perches for aerial predators.

**Avoiding Uninvited Guests** - Use of 3/4-inch roosting spaces reduces the risk of wasps. If nests do accumulate they should be removed in late winter or early spring before either the wasps or bats return to the house. Open-bottom bat houses keep birds, mice, squirrels, or other small animals from nesting inside and allows the guano to drop to the ground. This eliminates the need to clean the bat house and greatly reduces maintenance needs.

Bats make up one fifth of all terrestrial mammals with over 1100 known species. They are among the most endangered of the world's creatures, primarily because their habitat continues to be eliminated by human development and because they are wrongly persecuted. But bats are highly beneficial to their environments; they are global dispersers of seeds, they are pollinator of many plants, including important food crops, and they consume millions of tons of insects every night. The loss of bats has serious consequences for ecosystem and human health.

You can help conserve Florida's bats! Erecting a bat house provides a safe roost. Bat Belfrys Inc. uses field-tested designs and materials which increase curb appeal and encourage bat colonization.



## BAT BELFRYS INC.

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# BAT HOUSE CURB APPEAL



## BAT BELFRYS INC.

- Bat Education
- Bat Houses
- Native Bee & Pollinator Products



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# Bat Biology

There are 13 species of bats which inhabit Florida either permanently or seasonally. Eight of these species are found in Central Florida, and five of them live in social groups known as colonies. They can inhabit man-made structures such as bridges, buildings, and bat houses. These Florida bats are:



Big brown bat: (*Eptesicus fuscus*) 2" to 3" long, 12" wingspan; long fur can be golden brown, reddish brown or chocolate brown, facial and wing skin is nearly black.



Brazilian free-tailed bat: (*Tadarida brasiliensis*) 2" to 3" long, 12" wingspan; fur is short and usually dark brown; easily identified by their free-hanging tails.



Tri-colored bat: (*Perimyotis subflavus*) 1.5" to 2" long, 8" wingspan; fur may be silver, yellow or light brown; wings are black with pink on fore-arms.



Evening Bat: (*Nycticeius humeralis*) 2" to 2.5" long, 11" wingspan; fur can be golden brown, reddish brown or chocolate brown, facial and wing skin is nearly black.



Southeastern Myotis: (*Myotis austrorparius*) 2" long, 10" wingspan; fur may be brown, gray or red and each strand is typically bi-colored, darker at the base, lighter at the tip.

Most bats in Florida are also found elsewhere in the United States where they roost in caves. Since Florida doesn't have many caves, bats can take up residence inside attics, cracks and crevices in bridges, stadiums, statues, gazebos, and the like.

Erecting bat houses attracts bats to your property without inviting them into your home! Bats provide constant insect control without the expense and hazards of chemicals.

All of Florida's bats are insectivores and are known for eating massive amounts of insects, including mosquitoes, each night. They primarily capture flying insects and eat them mid-flight, but they will occasionally engage in 'gleaning' insects from leaves, walls or the ground.

Bats are nocturnal and leave the colony around sunset to begin hunting for food. Most bats consume their entire body weight in insects each night, while pregnant and nursing mothers may eat twice as much. It is safe to say that bats consume many tons of insects every night!



Brazilian free-tail and Evening bats emerge from the University of Florida's bat house.

This bat house is located in Gainesville and has been occupied by bats longer than any other bat house in North America!



## What About Diseases?

Bats are most typically associated with rabies, although less than .05% of bats will ever become infected with the disease.

Never handle a bat or any other wild animal, even if it appears dead. Injured or ill wildlife should be contained if possible, and a wildlife rehabilitation specialist should be called to remove the animal.

Other simple precautions include teaching children not to handle or harass wildlife, keeping pets away from roosting locations, and maintaining rabies vaccines for dogs and cats.

Histoplasmosis is a fungus found in bat droppings, called guano, that can cause influenza-like symptoms if inhaled. Avoid handling guano with your hands and always stand upwind when sweeping or shoveling guano.

Following these simple guidelines and just leaving bats alone will not only keep you and your family safe, but also the bats!