

Alberta's Amazing Bats

A year in the life of a bat

Alberta bats

There are at least nine species of bats in Alberta. All are small, and some bats weigh less than a loonie. Alberta bats use echolocation to find and catch insects, including pests like mosquitoes. They play an important ecological role by helping to keep nocturnal insect populations in balance. A mother bat can eat up to its weight in insects in a night!

Bats need our help

- Keep big old trees, vegetation and wetlands for roosting and foraging habitat
- Do not disturb bats, give them space to raise their pups and hibernate safely
- Report and monitor bat roosts
- Be a bat advocate and tell your friends and families that bats are useful!



Big Brown Bat
Photo Credit: Cory Olson

Did you know?

Bats are not blind, all bats can see.

To learn more about bats, including the threats they face and how to help, visit: www.albertabats.ca

Spring

Once insects are available, bats emerge from hibernation and migratory species return to Alberta. This usually occurs around April or May, and sometimes earlier in southern Alberta.

Summer

Depending on the species, bats roost in trees (under loose bark, in cavities, or amongst foliage), in rock crevices and in buildings. Female bats may roost in large colonies to have their pups.

Bats usually have only one pup each summer and nurse it with milk. Pups are able to cling to their mothers as soon as they are born. Pups begin flying after about 4 weeks, but still depend on their mother's milk while they learn to catch insects.



Little Brown Bat



Long-eared Bat



Hoary Bat

Did you know?

Bats do not get caught in your hair.



Little Brown Bat
Photo Credit: Cory Olson



Western Small-footed Bat
Photo Credit: Cory Olson



Hoary Bat
Photo Credit: Jason Heatley

Fall

By the end of September, most migratory species have left Alberta, and hibernating species are building up fat stores for the winter.

Most bats mate at this time of year, often gathering in swarms near hibernation sites.

Hibernation sites are usually crevices in rocks and talus slopes, and sometimes caves and mines. Bats may travel hundreds of kilometres to hibernation sites, and are usually hibernating by October or November. Occasionally, big brown bats hibernate in buildings.

Winter

Bats that stay in Alberta hibernate for six to seven months. It is important to avoid disturbing hibernating bats so that they do not use up their fat stores before spring.

Did you know?

Bats live a long time. One bat in Alberta lived to at least 39 years.

Bats and human health

Bats prefer to avoid people but will bite in self defence. Less than one per cent of bats have rabies, but as a precaution you should always avoid direct contact with bats. If you are concerned about rabies exposure, contact Alberta Health immediately.