U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Beneficial Bats

Backyard Habitat for Wildlife

Bat Facts

Did you know that

- Bats, like humans are mammals. Females usually give birth to one young or pup per year.
- Bats are nocturnal—active at night, resting during the day.
- Bats actually have excellent eyesight, and are never "Blind as a bat!" To find their way around in the dark, they use echolocation or a built in sonar.
- Bats can weigh as little as two grams (less than 1/10 of an ounce) or as much as two pounds.
- Bats are the only mammals that can fly.

Bat Food

All eastern bats found in the United States feed only insects and can eat one half of their body weight in one night! Their favorite flying bugs are moths and soft-shelled beetles such as lightning bugs. Areas that have bats have very few flying insects at night. An average bat will eat more than 3000 bugs a night! A typical summer colony of 1000 bats, each only weighing about a third of an ounce will consume, in a 200 day active season, more that 2200 pounds of insects or approximately 600,000,000 bugs!

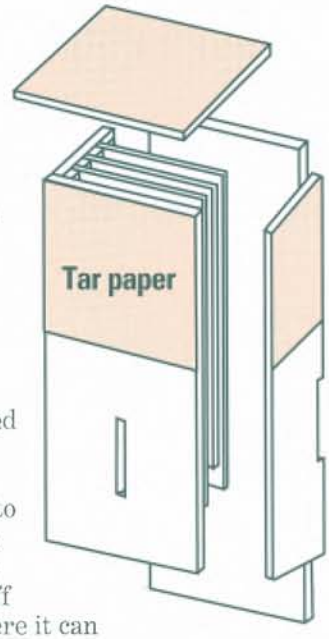
Bats in Georgia

Many different kinds of bats—one of which is endangered—can be found living in caves and trees throughout Georgia.

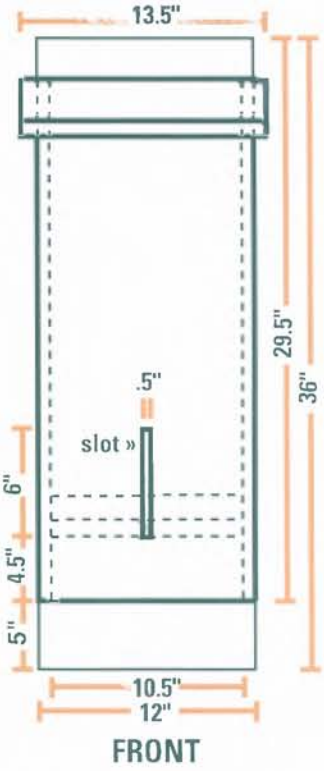
Indiana Bat (endangered)
Southeastern Bat
Northern Long-eared Bat
Eastern Pipistrelle
Big Brown Bat
Rafinesque's Big-eared Bat
Eastern Red Bat
Seminole Bat
Hoary Bat
Northern Yellow Bat
Silver-haired Bat
Evening Bat
Brazilian Free-tailed Bat

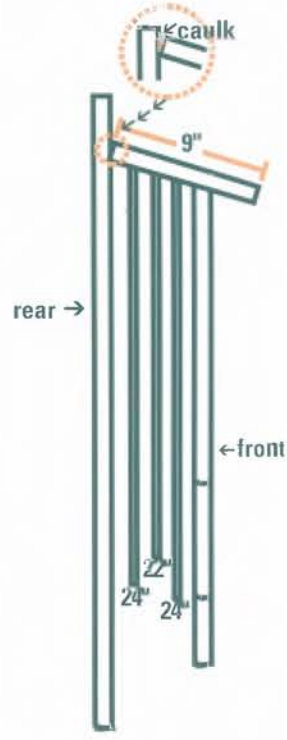
Attracting Bats

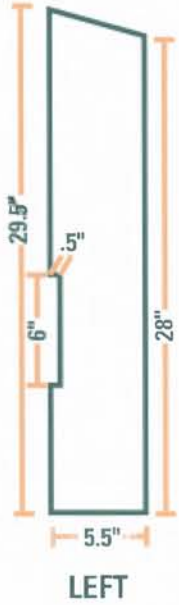
Most eastern bats spend the winter hibernating in caves and move to trees or buildings for the summer. Some however, spend all year in caves and others (tree bats) seldom see a cave, preferring to roost in trees during the warm summers and tree hollows for the cool winters. As hollow trees become harder and harder to find, bat boxes, such as the one shown on the back, become more and more important to the bat's survival. This is especially true for April to August when females are looking for safe and quiet places to give birth and raise their young. Both the young mothers and newborns are very sensitive to being disturbed.



A bat box may be installed anytime but late winter and early spring is best. This gives the bats time to look it over as they move out of hibernation. Hang the box at least 10 feet off the ground, in a spot where it can receive the morning sun. About 100 - 150 bats can live in an average bat box.





Building a Bat House

- Cut all pieces to size, out of old wood if possible.
- Space shallow saw kerfs or knife gouges about 1" apart on the plywood baffles to give the bats something to cling to. Plastic (but not metal) screen material may be stapled on instead.
- Screw 3/4" x 1" spacer strips on side panels to make slots for the baffles.
- Attach front panel to sides. Add roof. Glue baffle edges and drop into slots. Attach back panel.
- Darken with waterbase stain and tack or staple tar paper to roof and top third of the box to increase heat absorption.