

# Bats



Provided they are not actually nesting in your home, having bats on your property can be beneficial, as they prey on several common pest insects, such as moths, mosquitoes, and black flies.

Bats give birth to single babies, which mature swiftly and are capable of flight and able to eat insects as well as their mothers' milk at three weeks of age. Bats mate prior to their hibernation cycle; the females store sperm over the winter, and ovulation and fertilization occurs in the spring. They typically give birth in mid-June.

Though bats rarely attack people (and will not, contrary to urban legend, get caught in your hair), they do spread disease. Bats can carry both rabies and histoplasmosis, which is a fungal illness that presents with flu-like symptoms. If dust containing the fungal spores is inhaled, it can result in a lung infection.

## Bats in your belfry?

If you have a bat flying around your house, don't panic. Open every available exit and it will eventually find its way to one and fly out. If this doesn't work, call the Animal Movers, and we will remove it safely and humanely.

With nearly one thousand species worldwide, bats make up almost one quarter of all mammal species. Mammals give birth to live offspring and nurse their young, but bats are the only mammals that can truly fly. Sometimes they are mistakenly called "flying rodents" or "flying rats".

## Bat (*Chiroptera*)

Getting rid of bats that have made their way into your home is critical, as they can pose a health risk to you, your family, and your pets. Though they naturally roost in tree foliage or hollows, bats can occasionally move into the attics and barns, drawn by the warmth. They can enter a building through openings as small as one centimetre in diameter. The presence of bats in a dwelling can be detected by the presence of droppings, or of brown stains on the ceilings or walls, possibly accompanied by a musty urine odour, as well as by the presence of live bats flying into and out of an attic space.

Bats are nocturnal, active at night and asleep during the day. The best time to spot them is at dusk. Bats do not use vision to navigate. Instead, they rely on sonar, emitting high-frequency sounds and determining the location of obstacles or prey by the echoes that bounce back. The bats local to the Greater Toronto Area are insectivores, and can eat up to half their weight in insects in a single night.

Bats are natural reservoirs for a large number of diseases including rabies, severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS), Henipavirus and possibly ebola virus. Their high mobility, broad distribution, and social behaviour (communal roosting, fission-fusion social structure) make bats favourable hosts and transmitters of disease. Many species also appear to have a high tolerance for these pathogens and often do not develop the disease while infected.

Nineteen species of bats have been recorded in Canada, and 17 of them are regular residents. The little brown bat is the most common, and best-known bat in Ontario. It lives in all parts of Canada in large numbers.