

Bat House Placement and Painting Tips

Your bat houses should be placed:

- From 10' (3 m) to 20' (6m) high – the higher the better to discourage predators.
- Bat houses should face south, east or west (depending on location and maximum number of hours of direct sun) to ensure the best solar exposure. Bat houses placed on a post should face due south to allow for the best temperature gradient. Do not mount bat houses on power and telephone poles as they prevent utility service/maintenance activities.
- Buildings make ideal locations for bat houses due to the
- Put your bat house up by April-May to make it more likely that bats returning from winter hibernation move in.
- If possible locate your bat house near a water source (egs. lake or stream).
- Keep your bat house location away from lights. Bats may hunt near a light source but they will not roost near one.
- Locate the bat house in an uncluttered location that does not have branches, buildings, or poles in front of it. Bats need room to swoop in to roost.
- When painting your bat house, dark colours are preferred as they help absorb solar heat and keep the roost warm.
- Use a water based, non-toxic paint or stain for painting.

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Best places to locate a bat box (from *Bat Houses in BC*, 2015)

Bat houses should be mounted on poles or buildings, which provide the best protection from predators. Wood or stone buildings with good solar exposure are excellent choices, and locations under the eaves often have been successful. All **bat** houses should be mounted at least 12 feet above ground; 15 to 20 feet is better.

Optimal Bat House Location

The location of a bat house is critical to its success. There are many factors to consider when selecting a site including solar exposure, habitat, mounting, obstacles, protection from predators, and wasps.

In summary, bat houses should be placed:

- At least 10' (3 m) high but 12' to 20' is better,
- South, east or west facing to ensure correct solar exposure,

- In an uncluttered location that does not have branches, buildings, or poles in front of it, and
- Away from lights or high wind.

Sun exposure

An important criterion for bat house location is sun exposure. If you have several possible sites to choose from, observe the site during the summer to determine optimal sun exposure (this could change depending on the time of the year). Bat houses placed on a post should face due south to allow for the best temperature gradient. Bat houses placed on buildings may face east, west or south, depending on the ideal hours of direct sun. Ideally a bat house will be exposed to morning sun and not the hot afternoon sun. A spot with afternoon shade is ideal. In all other areas place bat houses to receive as much sun as possible (at least 10 hours).

Height

The base of a bat house should be at least 3 m (10') above the ground although 12' to 20' is better. The height is measured from what a bat would perceive as the "ground" which may be the roof of a shed or other building if the bat house is mounted above a structure (such as a lower roof) rather than the ground.

Mounting Structure

Bat houses can be successfully placed on poles or posts or on the sides of buildings or outbuildings. **Bat houses mounted on wood, brick, or stone buildings with good solar exposure are good choices** since the building helps radiate heat into the bat house during the evenings. Mounting on a building is critical for single-chambered bat houses.

Bat houses mounted on 20' (6 m) poles (wooden, 4' by 4' or metal) put 4' in the ground have been successful since they can be mounted high, face any direction, and placed free of clutter.

An ideal scenario for batboxes is to mount two multi-chambered bat houses back to back on a pole so that one faces north and the other faces south with opportunities for bats to move between them. The bottom of the posts can be braced to make them more secure and prevent them from being blown over. Trees and snags are not recommended since they are more difficult for bats to find, more vulnerable to predators, and usually receive less sun exposure. However, trees that are significantly delimbed (to act as poles) are successful. Although power and telephone poles are usually in excellent locations, these structures are not permitted since they prevent maintenance activities.

Tips for installation

To install a pole or a post for a bat house, consider fixing one or two short posts in the ground and then levering a tall pole up (Figure 2). Another option is to mount an eye hook to the roof of the bat house and then hoist it into position for securement.

Obstacles

Bats like a clear path to fly out of their house so that they can detect predators and easily avoid obstacles. Bat houses should be placed in open areas where there is no or little clutter such as on a post in the middle of a field or on the side of a building with no obstructions for at least 5

m. If a bat house is mounted on a tree (not recommended), the branches should be de-limbed below and around the bat house to create an open, uncluttered area.

Habitat

Ideally, bat houses should be situated near good foraging and drinking habitat such as streams, rivers, lakes or ponds. Bat houses within 400 m of a larger pond or lake have been known to have great success than those farther away. However, it is still worth installing a bat house in areas away from water since bats can travel many kilometres each night to drink and forage. Forest openings are good settings for placing a bat house as they have good solar exposure and are uncluttered. If a bat house is being installed in combination with bat exclusion from a building, you may wish to try several bat houses in different locations including at least one near the current roost site. However, placing a bat house where bats are exiting and entering the building is not always the best location, depending on solar exposure, clutter, and other factors. It is more important for the bat house to be in a high, uncluttered and warm location than it is to be near the current roost site. Avoid mounting bat houses close to bright lights and select sites that are free from heavy winds.

Protection from Predators

House cats are one of the largest predators of bats in BC, although raptors, weasels, and other animals may prey on bats. Predation can be avoided by mounting a bat house high since cats are good hunters and may be able to kill bats if the access point to the bat house is too low. A slippery sheet metal guard can be wrapped on the bottom of a wooden post or tree to deter predators at these sites. To reduce predation by raptors, try to mount the bat house at least 20' (6 m) from the nearest tree branches, wires or other potential perches for aerial predators.

Interaction with People and Pets

Bat houses should be placed high enough to avoid direct contact between people (e.g. curious children) and pets. To minimize the chance of young children coming into contact with a bat that may fall from the roost, bat houses and condos in public spaces, such as parks and school grounds, should be placed in sites that do not experience a high level of human activity. This site selection will also reduce potential vandalism and disturbance issues.

Enhancing Bat Habitat on a Community Scale

Community considerations for bat conservation should include strategic planning regarding placement of bat houses, styles of houses used, and sizes, including consideration of condos. A community event to have many bat houses (or a condo or bat barn) built, can draw upon volunteers for donation of wood, supplying of tools, and labour for construction. These houses can then be erected strategically in the community to ensure a localized distribution of houses with different microclimates. For example, having two bat houses (e.g. north and south facing) on the same pole, may be more beneficial than having each bat house on its own pole away from each other. The community construction of a bat condo could be considered in areas where there is ample foraging habitat to support a large population of bats.

When should I put up a bat house?

Although a bat house can be installed at any time of year, bats are likely to move into a bat house when they first return from winter hibernation in April or May. If the bat house is being installed in combination with eviction, install the bat house at least two to six weeks before the actual exclusion.

[How long until bats move into my bat house?](#)

The success of a bat house depends on the design, location, and whether or not there are bats in the neighborhood looking for a roost site. When a bat house is installed in combination with exclusion of a colony from a building, it has a high chance of being successful. In other situations, it may take time before the bat house is used. Weathering of the wood may influence the suitability of the bat house.