

# How to Help Urban Bats



Bats live everywhere—even cities. But city living, which comes with limited roosting spots, noise and artificial lights, can be challenging for bats.

## **FOOD, WATER AND SHELTER**

City development often means a loss of food, water and shelter for animals, including bats. Faced with fewer natural roosting spots, bats will often take up residence in buildings. Roosting in buildings is not good for bats or humans. Bats can be exposed to more predators, including cats and dogs. Humans, unaware of the important role bats play in the environment, may kill bats found in buildings. Habitat loss also causes the overall number of bats to decline as multiple species have to compete for food in a smaller area.

## **LIGHT AND NOISE**

Current research on bats and artificial light suggests that city lights do affect bats' nocturnal rhythm and decreases overall activity. Yellow-white lights appear to have a greater impact than bluish-white lights. However, light-tolerant species, such as Pipistrelles, are able to capitalize on the abundance of prey, particularly moths, attracted to the lights. Light-sensitive species, such as the rhinolophids, are less successful in these situations.

Noise also disrupts bats' natural behavior and it is suspected that it leads to a decrease in overall fitness. Lab research suggests that background traffic noise interferes with echolocation, making it more difficult for bats to successfully locate food.

## **THREATS TO MIGRATORY BATS**

Successful bat houses need to be at least 15 feet off the ground, face south or southeast and have no obstructions underneath or directly in front of the house. These requirements, combined with living spaces that are often rented, can be challenging for the city dweller. If you rent, consider asking your landlord if you can place a bat house on the side of the building. This can give female bats a warm roost with protection from predators. You can also ask your city managers if bat houses can be installed in city parks and other green spaces.

If you are unable to install a bat house, you can still help bats by planting bat-friendly plants, including climbing vines that give solitary bats a safe place to sleep, in containers in your backyard, balcony or windowsill. For a complete bat gardening guide for containers, visit [www.batconservation.org](http://www.batconservation.org).



For more information about bats, visit [www.batconservation.org](http://www.batconservation.org)  
and [www.fs.fed.us/global](http://www.fs.fed.us/global)



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