

# Migratory Bats in North America



## **MIGRATORY BATS**

Bats across the world have different strategies to handle changing temperatures. In warm climates, bats are able to stay where they are and continue feeding and roosting without much change. But bats in cold climates will either hibernate or migrate to a warmer location.

In the northern part of North America, solitary, tree-dwelling bats, such as the Red bat and Silver-haired bat, will migrate when winter approaches. In southern areas, colonial bats, such as Mexican Free-tailed bats, will also migrate south.

## **WHY BATS MIGRATE**

Bats, like birds, fish and even insects, will migrate with the seasons to fit with changing patterns in food, water and shelter. In the north, the cold causes leaves to fall off trees, making it too hard for tree-dwelling bats to stay warm. Insects are no longer active and water freezes, making it near impossible to find enough food and water.

Bats in the southern U.S. migrate to follow food. The Mexican Free-tailed bat, for example, migrates to Mexico in winter as moths move south. When the moths return in spring, the Mexican free-tailed bats follow.

While some bats migrate south to follow food, other northern bats will migrate to find a place to hibernate. Some bats that live in southern Canada will migrate south to caves in New York to hibernate for the winter.

## **THREATS TO MIGRATORY BATS**

Migratory bats die by the hundreds of thousands each year, primarily by colliding with wind turbines. Of the deaths, Hoary bats comprise the largest percentage. Hoary bats migrate over long distances and wide ranges and come in contact with the turbines most frequently. Research suggests that bats mistake wind turbines for large trees and see them as good resting spots. As the bats approach, they are caught in the airflow and are killed when they collide with the blades. The other big threat to migratory bats is habitat loss. As trees and other natural structures are removed to make way for more development, bats are unable to find familiar flight patterns and healthy resting spots.

## **SAVING MIGRATORY BATS**

Wind turbine operators are working with bat conservationists and government agencies to decrease the impact on bats.

Turning off the blades during slow wind times has shown to decrease bat deaths significantly. The American Wind Energy Association has committed to taking this step.



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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