

Guidelines excerpted from:  
**Bats in Buildings: An Information and Exclusion Guide**  
*by Barbara French, Laura Finn and Mark Kiser*

### **Introduction**

As primary predators of night-flying insects, bats play a vital role in maintaining the balance of nature. A single little brown bat can catch 1,200 mosquito-sized insects in an hour, and big brown bats are important predators of some of America's most costly crop pests. Cucumber beetles, June beetles, bark beetles, stink bugs, leafhoppers, cutworm moths, corn earworm moths, armyworm moths, termites, assassin bugs, ants, roaches, crickets, and grasshoppers are just some of the many pests known to be consumed by America's bats. Yet, bat populations are in alarming decline due to decades of unwarranted human fear and persecution.

As traditional roosts in trees and caves have been destroyed, many of North America's bats have been forced to seek shelter in man-made structures. An understanding of the habits of these beneficial animals can help solve problems that sometimes develop when bats roost in buildings. The following pages provide details about safe, effective methods for permanently evicting bats from buildings when necessary. These methods help ensure the safety of both humans and bats.

### **Accidental Intruders**

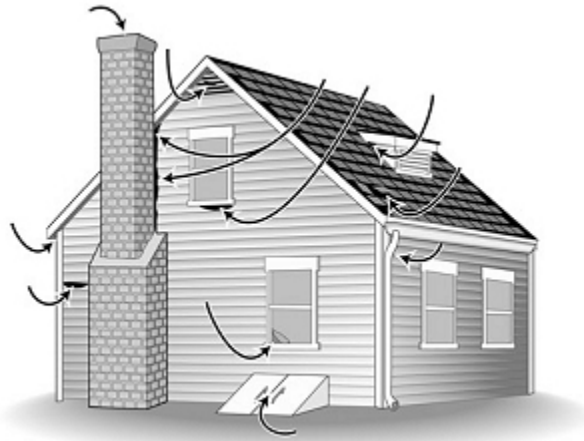
#### **What if you find a bat in your home?**

On occasion, a solitary bat may accidentally fly into a home, garage or other building through an open door or window. Such incidents often involve lost youngsters whose primary goal is a safe escape. As long as no direct contact with the bat has occurred, it can be released outside. These bats will usually leave on their own if a window or door to the outside is opened while others leading to the rest of the building are closed. Bats are rarely aggressive, even if chased, but may bite if handled. As with any wild animal, bats should not be touched with bare hands, and anyone bitten should immediately seek medical consultation.

If a bat does not leave your home on its own, its exit can be hastened by waiting until it lands, and then covering it with a small box or other container. Slip a piece of cardboard between the wall and box, slide the bat into the box, then release the bat outside. You may also catch it by hand, using leather work gloves to avoid being bitten. Keep doors and windows to buildings closed, and window screens in good repair, to prevent bats from reentering.

**Where do bats roost?** Bats may roost in attics, soffits, louvers, chimneys, under siding, eaves, roof tiles or shingles and behind shutters (see diagram). In sports stadiums and parking garages, bats sometimes roost in expansion joints between concrete beams. They can enter through openings as small as one-half inch in diameter (1.3 cm). Common points of entry include open windows or doors, broken or poorly-fitted screens, loose or missing shingles or tiles, places where flashing or boards have come loose and locations where pipes or wiring enter buildings. Openings often occur where walls meet the eaves at the gable ends of an attic, where porches attach to the main part of a house, or where dormers meet the roof. Other points of entry are associated with siding. For example, cracks and crevices are often created where siding forms corners, or at places where it meets windows, doors or chimneys (see diagram). Bats can sometimes be detected by the presence of black or brown stains from body oils or droppings around cracks or crevices formed by ill-fitting building materials. Bat droppings may also appear on walls, under porches or decks, or on floors beneath dilapidated ceilings. Bat droppings are dark and do not contain any white material. Although they may resemble small hard rodent pellets, bat droppings are soft and easily crushed, revealing shiny insect parts.





Common entry points on homes and buildings include corners, eaves and louvres.

### **Providing a safe exit for bats**

There is little reason to evict bats from buildings where they are not causing a nuisance. However, bats should be prevented from entering human living quarters. This can be accomplished by inspecting the inside of a building for small openings through which bats could enter. All openings connecting the attic or other roosting areas to inside living quarters should be sealed, although entry points on the outside of the building should be left open, allowing bats to exit. Draft-guards should be placed beneath doors to attics; electrical and plumbing holes should be filled with steel wool, caulking or weatherstripping. Bats have small teeth for eating insects; they do not gnaw through wood or other building materials like rodents. Caulking, flashing, screening or insulation can be used to seal most openings on the inside. Expanding urethane foam products should not be used to seal cracks where bats are active, because they can become caught in it. Caulk should also be applied early in the day so that it has time to dry before bats emerge in the evening.

In some instances, noise or odors from large colonies of bats can become a nuisance. When bats must be evicted from a building, netting or tubes that function as one-way valves must be placed over the openings bats use to enter and exit. These one-way valves allow bats to leave, but not reenter the building. Valves may be constructed from lightweight plastic netting (1/6 inch-0.4 cm-or smaller mesh), or plastic pipes or tubes. These exclusion devices should be left in place for five to seven days to ensure all bats have exited. It is not appropriate simply to wait for bats to fly out at night and then seal openings. Not all of the bats leave at the same time, and some bats may remain inside all night. Take weather conditions into consideration when deciding how long to leave the netting or tubes in place; there may be evenings (such as during storms), when no bats exit.

Bats often roost in buildings seasonally, including during maternity periods, and exclusions should not take place until young bats are able to fly. After the young are old enough to fly, all bats can be excluded. The maternity season begins as early as mid-April in the southernmost U.S., mid-June in the northern U.S. and Canada. Young bats are flying and exclusions can resume by late August. In late fall most house-dwellings bats either migrate to warmer climates or enter caves or abandoned mines to hibernate. However, a few species can hibernate in buildings, and in the mildest climates, they may even remain active year-round. If bats are present in cold regions during the winter, exclusions should be postponed until spring when they emerge to feed.

Exclusion is the **ONLY** effective solution for permanently removing bats from buildings. Trapping and relocating is ineffective since bats have excellent homing instincts and simply return, even when released at great distances. The use of pesticides against bats is illegal and counterproductive. Poisoning greatly increases the likelihood of bats coming into contact with people and pets.

Naphthalene, the active ingredient in moth balls, and ultrasonic devices are often promoted as bat repellents. However, ultrasonic devices are ineffective against bats, and to be effective, naphthalene must be used in such large quantities that it poses a significant health hazard to humans.

[Continue to Do-It-Yourself 2 >>](#)

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