

Bats-One Piece of Ontario's Rich Biodiversity

We have eight species of bats in Ontario and all of them make home in Renfrew County for at least part of the year. These bats include 1.Northern Long-eared 2.Eastern Small-footed 3.Little Brown 4.Big Brown 5.Eastern Pipistrelle 6.Hoary 7.Silver-haired 8.Eastern Red

The first five species live here year-round, while the remaining three species migrate south for the winter. The most common species, the bat that you are most likely to see in Renfrew County, is the Little Brown Bat.

One of the greatest threats to North American bat populations is the White Nose Syndrome (WNS). WNS is a fungus that will grow on the flesh of the bats in cooler temperatures. It is killing large numbers of bats across Ontario, and Eastern Canada and the United States.



Where Do Bats Live in the Summer?

Bats need shelter, food, water and space to survive. Male and female bats do not live together during the summer months. Many things are still unknown about the bats and where the males go in the summer is one of them. They are thought to roost independently in tree cavities or rock

crevices. The females on the other hand roost together in groups called nursery colonies where they give birth and raise young pups.

When the sun sets, females begin to emerge from the nursery colony to feed on insects. Bats use echolocation to find their prey. A mother bat needs to eat three times their

body weight to produce enough milk for her pup, and put on extra body fat that she will need to survive the winter.

Where Do Bats Live in the Winter?

When summer comes to an end and the temperature begins to decrease, male and female bats begin to look for a place to spend the winter. The cold, dark, damp winter homes of bats are referred to as hibernacula.

Natural caves and abandoned mines provide the exact condition bats need in the winter-temperatures just above freezing, darkness, quiet, and high humidity.

The largest known hibernaculum in Ontario is found in Renfrew County. Between 15,000 and 20,000 bats spend the winter there every year.

Bats begin to hibernate in October, slowing their metabolism to ensure their fat reserves last until spring. On occasion, bats will awaken briefly during winter hibernation, but every time a bat wakes up, they use up vital energy stored in their body fat. For this reason, it is important that bat hibernacula

remain undisturbed during the winter months.

You Can Help Us Help Bats

Bats are an important piece of Ontario's biodiversity. Here are some ways you can help bats:

1. Monitor a Roost for an evening and count how many bats exit the site

If you know of an area where a large number of bats are known to live, try to count how many bats exit the site at night. The best time to do this is in July or August. Start monitoring the site a half hour before dusk. It usually takes an hour to estimate the number of bats. By giving your Renfrew County bat observation data to MNR in Pembroke, you will contribute to our local knowledge of bat ecology.

2. Install a bat house

Natural habitat for bats is limited and as a result bats have a difficulty finding appropriate places to live. Consider setting up a bat house as an alternative habitat. The bats will love it and you will benefit directly by having fewer insect pests in your yard.

3. Maintain access to natural caves and abandoned mines

If you have an abandoned mine or natural cave on your property, where bats may hibernate during the winter, make sure the entrance to the site is easily accessible for the bats. Remove any fallen trees that may block the entrance over time. Also try to ensure that the bats remain undisturbed over the winter months.

Interested in Participating in a Bat Research Project?

Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR) Pembroke District Office has initiated a long-term bat population monitoring study in the Renfrew County area. Ministry staff is collecting information about what species live in the area, locations where bats roost during the summer months, and locations where bats hibernate during the winter months.

Renfrew County residents are encouraged to get involved by providing information about:

- Areas where they know bats roost during the summer (attics, barns, churches, school houses etc.)
- Areas where they know caves exist
- Areas where they know abandoned mines exist

Contact Amy Cameron, Planning Ecologist with the Ministry of Natural Resources, Pembroke District at (613) 732-5506.