

International Bat Appreciation Day occurs annually on April 17<sup>th</sup>



BC has 15 species of bats and 13 of these species have been confirmed in the Lillooet area. Our largest bat is the Hoary Bat, with a wing span of 39 cm and weighing as much as a dinner fork. The Spotted bat, pictured here, is also a large bat and the only one that makes a noise audible to the human ear. You may have noticed large moths appearing at night during the month of March. That coincides with the arrival of the Spotted bats. Listen at night for their distinctive clicking sounds.

Some species of bats can live up to 40 years. Bats reproduce slowly, usually having only one pup per year. Bats can see in the dark, have very good hearing, and use echolocation to navigate and find food. All our bats are insectivores, playing a vital role in managing insect populations (e.g., in one hour a bat can eat up to 600 mosquitoes). Bats consume an abundant number of insects such as agricultural and forest pests.

Bats in Canada hibernate or migrate in the winter, with little known about how and where. Bats are clean animals, grooming themselves almost constantly. Bats don't chew wood or wires like rodents. Their sharp teeth are used to crunch hard bodied insects. Half of our species are listed as vulnerable, threatened, or endangered. Bat populations are in trouble due to many threats including habitat loss, pesticides and White-nose Syndrome. All bats in BC are protected under the Wildlife Act.

Bats emerge from hibernation or return from more southern areas in the spring. Bats roost in natural and artificial sites such as old trees, buildings, and boxes, which are critical habitats for bats in BC. Some roost in human structures and there are maternity colonies, used year after year by related groups of females, who are preparing to give birth. Bats are fascinating and provide a great learning opportunity, especially for children. When conditions allow the Lillooet Naturalists will be leading a bat evening – stay tuned. We also have information on our site about bats [www.lillooetnaturalistsociety.org](http://www.lillooetnaturalistsociety.org)

You can help. Report known roost sites, dead bats, and unusual late winter/early spring bat behavior (e.g., bats flying during the daytime) to [info@bcbats.ca](mailto:info@bcbats.ca) or 1-855-922-2287.

Work to conserve bat habitats (e.g., old trees and buildings, water bodies) on your property and in the community. Participate in monitoring and habitat enhancement programs (e.g., box installation) to help bats. We have some excellent bat monitors and advocates in Lillooet.

A few years ago, the local Lions had a 'bat float' in the May Day parade and Anne C. Heath dressed up as a bat and handed out information pamphlets – a posthumous salute to Anne. Splitrock Environmental has some bat roost boxes for sale. Lillooet is a bat friendly community and we can all educate about bats and help with the stewardship of these wonderful species. Learn more at [www.bcbats.ca](http://www.bcbats.ca)