

### FURRY friends

Bats are an important part of the Canadian ecosystem. There are twenty species of these amazing flying mammals in Canada and they contribute a great deal to our lives in ways that you might not realize. For example, a single little brown bat (just one of those twenty species!) that weighs a mere 7-9g, can eat up to a kilogram of insects each and every summer, reducing crop damage caused by insect pests. That means it eats more than 100 TIMES its own weight in insects every year! We also understand a lot more about sonar, anticoagulants and the immune system by studying bats. Despite being frequently portrayed as sinister animals in movies and literature, it is clear that bats are highly valuable and important members of our wildlife community.

One of the biggest threats to bats remains human beings. Habitat destruction, caving, mining, and general misunderstanding of bats by the general public are among the human-led dangers to bats. Add to this the devastating outbreak of white-nose syndrome that has killed approximately 5.5 MILLION bats since 2007 and you start to see the monumental challenges that these important little creatures are facing.

### HELP our bats

The CWHC is heavily involved in Canada's response to White Nose Syndrome, coordinating the national surveillance and management effort from our regional centre in Atlantic Canada. However, this disease is only one thing affecting bats and as a result, we need to do all we can to help these animals survive and thrive. To see several things you can do for bats look at the following checklist:

- If a bat ends up in your house, or garage etc. the chances are that its lost. Don't panic and please don't kill the bat. If handled properly, bats can be safely removed from the home and released back into wild at no significant risk to you or your family. Like any wild animal, you should wear gloves to protect yourself from being bitten when picking up a bat to put it outside. If you are concerned about a household pet or a person being bitten by the bat or the bat appears sick, ensure you contact your local health department or wildlife agency for further instruction.
- Building a bat box is an easy way to help bats find safe and warm places to rest during the day. Remember, bats eat lots and lots of insects, so if you have a garden, these little insect-eating machines could be a great benefit to you.
- Caving is a popular and fun activity that thousands of Canadians enjoy every year. Please help to keep our bat species healthy and safe by reducing the chance of the spread of this disease by properly decontaminating after your day's fun. (See the CWHC website for decontamination procedures)



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