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# Your New Bat Box

The Natural Areas Program of the City of Fort Collins is happy to provide you with this bat house. These boxes are intended for people who have bats nearby or who would like to attract bats to their area. Bats need safe places to rest and raise their young. Installation of a bat box, especially if bats are already in residence, can help both bats and people.

## Mounting

Your bat house should be mounted 15-20 feet off the ground. The best locations are on poles or buildings near streams, ponds or forest edges as these are natural bat flyways.

Particular consideration should be given to sun exposure. According to Bat Conservation International, too little sun exposure is the primary cause of bat house failure. Bats need lots of heat, so a southern or western exposure is best. Bats move vertically inside the house to find the best temperature throughout the day. Visit BCI on the web at [www.batcon.org](http://www.batcon.org) for more information.

Be patient. Sometimes it takes many months for bats to discover this new place to live.



## Maintenance

Your bat box should require very little maintenance. In fact, once it's mounted, try to avoid disturbing it as bats are quite sensitive.

If you're not sure that bats are using your box, look for bat droppings (guano) on the ground under the box. If you need to repair or move your box, shine a flashlight up into the box during the day. Look for little brown or black lumps - their presence indicates bats are sleeping or hibernating inside and it's best not to disturb them. Wait until winter when they have migrated or moved to another location for hibernation.

Consider eliminating insecticides in your yard and garden as these are extremely toxic to bats.

Bats are gentle, intelligent little mammals that benefit humans by eating prodigious amounts of insects every night. They eat many different kinds of insects, including mosquitoes, moths, wasps, flies, midges, caddisflies and beetles. Bat Conservation International estimates that a single little brown bat (*Myotis lucifugus*) can eat 600 mosquitoes and moths in one hour. Just think what a entire colony can eat!

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## Which Bat is That?

Eighteen species of bats live in Colorado and they all eat insects. Bat species are hard to tell apart, but by knowing a few facts you can guess which bat you are watching. The most likely bats in the Fort Collins area are big brown, little brown, silver-haired and hoary.

Big brown bats (*Eptesicus fuscus*) are the most commonly seen bat in Colorado. When emerging at night to forage, they make straight swift flights about 20-30 feet above the ground. They forage in open areas and eat large and small insects. They also come to outdoor lights to catch insects. They hibernate in caves, mines, and rock crevasses.

Little brown bats (*Myotis lucifugus*) forage over water or in wooded areas about 8-20 feet off the ground. Look for them along the Poudre River and its ponds. They capture food by hitting the insects with their wing tips, catching it the membrane of their arms, and then transferring the food to their mouths. It takes lots practice to do this, and young bats must learn the technique from their parents.

Very little is known about little brown bats. Some may hibernate in Colorado.

Silver-haired bats (*Lasionycteris noctvagens*) are slow flyers, feeding near woodland ponds and streams, near the ground. They are usually solitary. They roost in tree cavities and behind loose bark.

Hoary bats (*Lasiurus cinereus*) forage in open areas but they eat different insects than the big brown bat. They might be seen, along with big brown bats, near street lamps or other outdoor lights. They are in Fort Collins from April to November. They migrate to warmer climates in the winter.



*Little brown bat (Myotis lucifugus) using echolocation with mouth open to track a moth.*



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## Bat Facts and Bat Myths

**Myth:** *Bats are blind.*

**Fact:** All bats can see and some have quite good eyesight.

**Myth:** *Bats get tangled up in people's hair.*

**Fact:** Bats get around at night and catch tiny insects using echolocation. This is extremely refined and more sophisticated than radar. Bats can detect single strands of human hair and can easily avoid you. This myth may have gotten started by bats catching insects that were attracted to humans. They were actually helping us out!

**Myth:** *Bats have super-natural powers.*

**Fact:** Bats have super-sensory abilities. They can navigate extremely well at night because of these abilities. They are active at night because that's when insects are most active.

**Myth:** *Bats are flying mice.*

**Fact:** Bats are not rodents, but they are only mammal that can fly.

**Myth:** *Bats have lots of litters every year.*

**Fact:** Most bat mothers produce only one baby per year. They lavish them with attention, making sure they have lots to eat and that they learn how to move around safely. Some bats even carry their babies with them when foraging at night. Because of their slow reproductive rate, bats are unable to recover quickly from disturbances.

**Myth:** *Most bats have rabies.*

**Fact:** Like all mammals, bats can get rabies. However, only 1/2 of 1% of bats get rabies. When they do, they are very sick and usually die. If you see a bat on the ground or during the daytime, it might be sick. Don't touch it, keep children and pets away, and call the Humane Society for Larimer County at 970-226-3647.



*Silver-haired bat (Lasionycteris noctvagens)*

For more information about bats, visit the Colorado Bat Society at [www.coloradobats.org](http://www.coloradobats.org) and the Colorado Division of Wildlife at [www.wildlife.state.co.us](http://www.wildlife.state.co.us). Click on *Wildlife Species and Species Profiles*.

