

Living Together Safely

Frequently Asked Questions

Australasia is home to many small, insect-eating bats (often called ‘microbats’) that sometimes roost in roofs, sheds, chimneys, or other parts of buildings. These guidelines answer common questions about these small bats in buildings, from identifying roosts and managing droppings to humane exclusions and ways to support local bat populations. As native wildlife, all bat species are protected by Australian law. Bats and people can coexist safely: with a little care, these tiny wildlife neighbours can help control insects around your home while you enjoy the benefits of a healthy local ecosystem.

Some useful terms to know:

Bat roost: A bat roost is any place where bats rest, sleep, or take shelter. Roosts can be natural, like tree hollows, caves, or rock crevices, or artificial, such as roof spaces, bat boxes, or abandoned buildings. Bats may use roosts temporarily during the day, seasonally, or for long-term maternity and over-winter sites.

Maternity colony: Generally speaking, a group of female bats that gather in a roost to give birth and raise their young.

Microbats: Small insect-eating bats, usually less than 30g, that use echolocation to navigate and hunt. Since large fruit-eating species don’t roost in buildings, this guide refers only to microbats, which will be referred to as ‘bats’ throughout the rest of this FAQ. There are over 70 species of microbats in Australasia. *Note: “microbat” is a common term, not a strict scientific grouping, but it helps distinguish these small bats from fruit bats (megabats).*

Echolocation: The biological sonar bats use to locate objects and prey by emitting ultrasonic sounds and listening to the returning echoes.

Humane exclusion: The process of safely removing bats from a building without harming them and preventing them from re-entering.

Guano: Bat droppings, often found under roosts; can indicate the presence of bats.

Bats in Buildings



Long-eared bat discovered in the cellar of a house in Donnybrook, Western Australia (Photo by Georgina Steytler).

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Bats in Buildings



Section 1: Help! I Have a Bat Inside the House

This section relates to a singular bat in the house, not where you have a bat roost. See [Section 4](#) and [6](#) for bat roosts in houses, and [Section 3](#) to determine whether you have a bat roost.

There's a bat inside my house. What should I do?

Usually bats end up in houses by mistake. They've chosen to roost in a box, an umbrella or coat on the verandah, settled into a fold in the washing on the line overnight, or been resting in firewood before finding themselves carried inside. Perhaps they followed a moth inside through an open door, or they could be roosting in the wall and found their way in through a gap. There are a myriad of reasons why they may end up in your house but there's no need to panic.

As soon as you see a bat inside:

- close any doors to other rooms to confine the bat to a single room.
- turn off any overhead fans.
- remove pets and/or children from the area. This makes it much easier to deal with and reduces stress for you and the bat.

Give the bat a chance to leave on its own. In most cases, the best first step is to allow the bat to find its own way outside.

- Open doors or windows that lead outdoors.
- Keep the room as quiet and dim as possible, but leave enough light to see where the bat is.
- Sit quietly and avoid sudden movements. If you need to move, walk normally through the room.

Bats that are flying will usually be looking for an exit and will avoid people. It may take some time, particularly if it is not yet fully dark or the bat is resting between flights, so patience helps. If the bat settles on a curtain, wall, or ceiling, this does not necessarily mean something is wrong. Bats often rest for periods, and in cooler weather may be dormant (torpid). Leave exit points open and give it more time, especially into the evening when bats naturally become more active.

When to seek help

Contact a wildlife rescue group or licensed bat carer if:

- The bat remains indoors overnight and has not left despite having a clear exit.
- The bat appears injured, grounded, or unable to fly.
- The bat is in a location where it cannot safely leave on its own.
- You are unsure what to do or feel uncomfortable managing the situation.

Wildlife carers can provide advice over the phone and help determine whether intervention is necessary.

What if the bat doesn't leave?

If the bat settles somewhere (for example on a curtain, wall, or ceiling) or does not leave after a reasonable time:

- Leave the exit points open and give it more time, especially if it is not yet fully dark.
- Keep the room quiet and dim where possible.

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If the bat remains indoors overnight, appears injured, or is unable to fly, contact a wildlife rescue group or bat carer for advice.

Do not handle the bat

Please do not try to pick up or handle a bat yourself. A small percentage of Australian bats carry Australian Bat Lyssavirus, which can be transmitted through bites or scratches. Although infection is rare, it is very serious. Effective treatment is available if medical care is sought promptly after a potential exposure. If you suspect you were bitten, please seek urgent medical attention. **If you do not touch a bat, you cannot catch lyssavirus.**

A bat is in my house and is trying to swoop me. What should I do?

Despite appearances (and a long history in mythology), bats do not intentionally swoop humans. Bats in confined spaces may fly close as they pass a person but they will always try to avoid collisions. They are simply looking for a way out. The idea of swooping comes from the fact that, as they take off, many insectivorous bat species first drop in height. This is to gain speed before they can start flying level.

Keep calm. Confine the bat to one room and follow the steps above.

I've found a bat trapped in a jar/vase/bucket/sink/light fitting or similar container. What should I do?

First, try to assess whether the bat is trapped or simply roosting temporarily. Bats can become genuinely trapped in containers with smooth, steep sides (such as sinks, buckets, or vases), where they cannot climb out. In these cases, the bat may become exhausted, dehydrated, or stressed and should be assisted as soon as possible.

In other situations (such as light fittings, fireplaces, or open containers) a bat may be resting or roosting temporarily and may be able to leave on its own once active at dusk. If you are unsure, it is safest to contact a wildlife rescue group, bat carer or bat expert for advice as soon as possible.

While waiting for advice:

- Keep the bat somewhere quiet, cool, and undisturbed.
- Keep pets and people away.
- Do not handle the bat with bare hands.

If you cannot reach a carer and it is approaching evening and the bat appears alert, responsive, and uninjured, you can give it the opportunity to leave on its own:

- Place the container on its side in a sheltered outdoor area OR
- Provide a gentle escape route, such as a towel or cloth draped inside so the bat can climb, while making sure the material won't inadvertently fall into the container and entrap the bat.

Then step away and allow the bat to leave undisturbed. Many bats will fly off once it is dark.

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Left: Southern forest bats trapped in a document holder outside a building in Wellington National Park, Western Australia. Bats are unable to crawl up the artificial slippery surface and in this case were trapped inside.

Right: Example of a singular roosting Gould's wattled bat inside a hole in a road culvert. This bat was not trapped, as it was able to climb in/out the cement downspout using the rough surface (Photos by Kelly Sheldrick).

Section 2: Preventing Entry into Living/Working Spaces

There are bats living in my roof. I don't mind them being there, but how do I prevent them getting inside my house?

Many people live safely with bats in their roof and, in most cases, the bats cause no problems. However, if bats are entering your living space (for example, your living room, bedroom, kitchen) then there are some steps you can take to prevent this.

Step 1: Find where bats are getting in

Bats can get through very tiny gaps in buildings. If you can jam the end of your thumb into a crack or a hole, it's possible a bat can get through. To stop the bats using these gaps, you need to identify all such entrance points. Start by checking the room where the bat was found. Look for any gaps or holes that connect to the roof space or outside. Common entry points include:

- Around ceiling downlights.
- Bathroom or kitchen exhaust fans.
- Air conditioning vents or ducts.
- Ventilation grids.
- Gaps around chimneys, flues or fireplace inserts.
- Cracks where walls meet ceilings.
- Around window or door frames (architraves).
- Loose ceiling access panels or attic hatches.
- Gaps in walls, especially in timber-lined, mud brick or log homes.

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Use a torch at night, with ceiling lights off, and look for light coming through small gaps. If you can see light, a bat might be able to get through.

Step 2: Seal the gaps - carefully and safely

Bats may be hiding in the roof cavity or wall space behind the gap. It is essential that no bats are present in these gaps before any work is undertaken to seal the gaps that bats are using to enter into living spaces. To reduce the chance of bats being present any work should be carried out at night and preferably outside the maternity season. If a bat is roosting in the gap, it can become trapped and die. Please remember that all bats are native species and protected by law and it is inhumane to deliberately seal gaps and entomb bats in these gaps. If unsure you can seek assistance from a bat ecologist or bat care group before commencing work.

Do not use expanding foam as bats and other wildlife can become trapped inside and die. Instead, use safer materials like:

- Silicone or acrylic sealant (for cracks or trim gaps).
- Flyscreen or mesh (to cover vents and fans).
- Brush-style door seals or draft stoppers.
- Timber strips or caulking cord for larger openings.

I keep finding bats in the living area of my house but I don't know where they are getting in.

If you don't know where the bats are gaining entry, close doors to all rooms each afternoon. Before going to bed, check the rooms to see if there are any bats.

Once you narrow your search down to specific rooms, look for mouse-like faeces on surfaces such as floors, window sills, cupboards or walls. If you find any, look directly above for gaps where bats may be coming and going. Then seal up the gaps once you have confirmed that no bats are present in these gaps (refer to 'Step 2' above). Bats do not deliberately remove material from gaps, regardless of what you use.

If you can't identify entrances and need help:

- Note down the time you see the bats inside (usually somewhere between dusk and dark).
- If you can safely do so, take a photo of the bat.
- Take photos of the room(s) where you most frequently see the bats.
- Contact your nearest wildlife rescue organisation or bat ecologist for assistance.

Bats keep appearing in our office building. How can we prevent them from getting in?

In addition to the common entrances identified above for houses, office buildings often have loosely-fitted ceiling tiles or rooftop air conditioning ducts. Both can result in bats inside the office. Where possible, all gaps need to be sealed once you have confirmed that no bats are present in these gaps (see 'Step 2' above).

If a bat is found inside the office, contact your nearest wildlife group or bat ecologist as soon as possible so they can advise on the next steps, and if appropriate collect the animal. While waiting for the bat to be collected, please advise staff to stay away and also keep pets isolated from the bat. Only those experienced with bats should attempt to handle the bat. See [Section 5](#) for more info.

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Section 3: Identifying a Bat Roost in a Building

How can I tell if I have a bat roost or something else like mice living in my house?

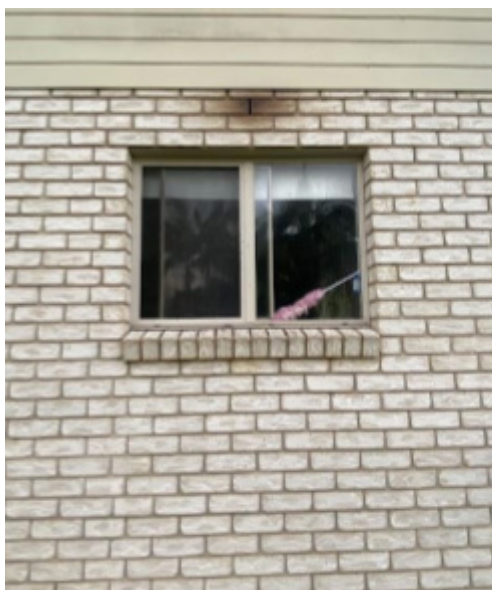
One of the easiest ways to tell if bats are roosting nearby is their poo! Bat droppings are very small, often shiny under a torch (because they're made of insect exoskeletons), and usually pile up outside roost entrances like eaves, roof gaps, or brick crevices. You might also see droppings stuck to walls, windows or doors, especially under eaves where bats roost. Rodent droppings are usually more scattered and will occur across horizontal surfaces both indoors and outdoors.

You can tell the difference by gently crushing a dropping (with gloves!): bat poo crumbles to dust, while rodent droppings will squish or can be hard. Any wildlife droppings can carry bacteria, so make sure to wear appropriate personal protective equipment and to wash your hands afterwards (see [Section 7](#) for example bat poo squish test and for guano cleanup).



Other signs to indicate bats are roosting in the building:

- Dark stains or scratch marks near holes or cracks.
- Chattering or squeaking behind walls, especially during the summer maternity season or at dusk.
- Baby bats found on the ground near buildings in summer - if you find a bat on the ground, it likely needs help. Call a local wildlife rescue group for advice.



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To confirm a roost, try watching from outside at dusk to see if bats fly out of suspected openings. Some species emerge just after sunset; others wait until full darkness. Early risers might spot bats returning just before dawn. Note that bats do not always leave each night - they may stay inside if conditions are unsuitable. For example, many bat species become less active on cooler nights when there are fewer insects around. Also, not all bats from a colony will leave the roost each night, so while you might see some bats leaving the building, it does not guarantee that all individuals have left. This is really important to remember if you are planning on sealing entrances to building roosts and why we suggest that professional assistance is sought if there is evidence that bats are roosting in your building.

Only microbats (tiny insect-eating bats) roost in buildings in Australia. They weigh just 4–30 grams, eat insects like mosquitoes, and don't chew or damage buildings like rodents do. It can be hard to identify what species of bat you have without photos. If you are able to get photos, you can post them to a citizen science site like iNaturalist [<https://inaturalist.ala.org.au>] to get help identifying your batty neighbours or if you're on Facebook share the photo on the Australian Bat Identification page [<https://www.facebook.com/groups/663929627394101>].

Section 4: Bats Roosting in or Around Buildings (Confirmed Roost)

What should I do if bats are roosting in my roof, walls, sheds or chimneys?

Bats naturally roost in tree hollows, under bark and in caves but they can also use buildings, roofs, walls, chimneys, sheds, patio blinds and umbrellas as safe places to rest or raise their young. Sometimes this is just temporary or seasonal; other times it may be a longer-term roost.

If you've confirmed bats are roosting at your place, don't panic! Many people live happily and safely alongside bats. Whether the bats are causing concern or not, here are some important points to consider:

Bats are beneficial to have around

- They consume thousands of insects each night, including mosquitoes
- Roosts in buildings provide vital shelter, especially where tree hollows have been lost due to land clearing
- Many species are small, quiet and may go unnoticed unless disturbed
- In many cases, bats only stay for part of the year and move on naturally

You can live safely alongside them.

- To reduce the chance of bats accidentally entering your living space, see [Section 3](#)
- To manage small amounts of guano (droppings), see [Section 5](#) and [Section 7](#) If you have pets, especially cats, see [Section 8](#) for advice on coexisting safely
- To support bats or encourage roosting in suitable areas, see [Section 9](#)

Managing guano (droppings)

- Bat droppings are generally dry but can build up in some locations
- In certain cases, droppings may cause odour or staining
- Follow standard hygiene when cleaning, including using gloves and washing hands afterwards - see [Sections 5](#) and [7](#) for more information.
- To support bats or encourage roosting in suitable areas, see [Section 9](#)

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If you've found bats unexpectedly or are unsure what to do, see [Section 1](#)

If bats are entering living areas, refer to [Section 3](#) for sealing gaps and managing access. Safe and humane exclusion may be possible, especially outside of maternity season - see [Section 6](#)



Large footed myotis maternity roost under a house in Sunshine Coast, Queensland (Photo by Robin Rowland).

I'm planning renovations or maintenance but I have a bat roost - what should I do?

If you know bats are roosting in the area, read [Section 6](#) before beginning any work. In some cases, an expert will need to be consulted prior to work being carried out.

If you accidentally uncover bats during the day:

- Do not disturb them - this can harm or kill the bats, especially if young are present.
- Contact a wildlife carer or bat expert immediately — see [Section 1](#)
- Do not touch the bats, if possible cover the exposed roost again or cover bats with box/fabric until you can get help.

Bats roosting in umbrellas, patio blinds or outdoor gear - what should I do?

This can be seasonal behaviour by some bats, especially in warmer months. If bats are found roosting in these items:

- Leave the item as you found it where possible, and avoid disturbing bats during the day.
- If no young bats are present, you can open or move the item after dark, once bats have left.
- Store the item in a shed or garage, or use a cover to prevent re-entry.
- Consider using a dedicated or “sacrificial” item (e.g. an old umbrella) if you're happy to provide a temporary roost.
- If you suspect baby bats may be present, contact a wildlife rescue group for advice — see [Section 1](#)

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Section 5: Concerns about Health and Safety

Do bat colonies cause structural damage?

Bats are not rodents, and do not nibble or gnaw wood or wires, and will not generally cause any structural damage. However, [many years](#) frames due to accumulation of poo, and bat urine has high concentrations of uric acid, which can corrode metal and in high volumes can rot timber and stain ceilings. [For more information check out this resource:](#)

<https://www.bats.org.uk/about-bats/bats-and-disease/bat-droppings-and-urine>

Are bats dangerous to my family and pets – do they carry zoonotic diseases?

Like all organisms, bats can carry bacteria and viruses, but the risk to people and pets is very low - especially if you don't touch bats. People who are not vaccinated against rabies (rabies isn't known to exist in Australia, but this will vaccinate against Australian Bat Lyssavirus) should never handle bats. In Australia, two known zoonotic diseases which bats can carry are Australian bat Lyssavirus (ABLV) and Hendra virus (HeV), both of which occur very rarely in bat populations.

Hendra virus is only associated with flying foxes, which do not roost in buildings, and in any case this virus is only known to infect humans via horses.

ABLV is a rabies-like virus that can be passed to humans through a bite or scratch from an infected bat. While very rare, without treatment infection is fatal, so apply first aid immediately (see Australian Centre for Disease Control) and seek medical advice urgently if bitten or scratched by a bat (Wildlife Health Australia, 2025). ABLV infection has not been found in pets but they may be susceptible so try to prevent your pets coming into contact with bats. If your pet comes into contact with a bat, it's best to isolate them from the bat, and speak to your vet (Biosecurity Queensland, 2020). *See section 8 for more information about bats and pets.*

ABLV cannot be caught by humans from bat droppings, urine, or bats flying nearby. However, bat droppings, like any animal waste, can carry other diseases, so avoid handling them with bare hands and wear a mask if cleaning up any animal droppings, especially in enclosed environments (Biosecurity Queensland, 2022). *See Section 7 for more on bat guano and clean up.*

Bats are essential to healthy ecosystems—they pollinate forests and control insect populations. The best way to stay safe is simple: **don't touch bats**. If you see a bat injured or on the ground, keep pets away and contact a wildlife rehabilitation organisation or veterinary hospital.

This information is for general awareness only. For medical advice or up-to-date information, check with your doctor or local health authority.

Resources and Further Reading

Australian Centre for Disease Control. (n.d.). Australian bat lyssavirus.

<https://www.cdc.gov.au/diseases/australian-bat-lyssavirus> Australian

Institute of Health and Welfare. (2024). Contact with animals.

<https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/injury/contact-with-animals>

Biosecurity Queensland. (2017, December 10). Hendra virus infection.

<https://www.qld.gov.au/health/condition/infections-and-parasites/viral-infections/hendra-virus-infection>

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Biosecurity Queensland. (2020). Australian Bat Lyssavirus Information for Veterinarians.

<https://www.publications.qld.gov.au/ckan-publications-attachments-prod/resources/d580174f-ec8d-4ab5-9bdc-95ffced669e2/ablv-information-for-veterinarians.pdf>

Biosecurity Queensland. (2022, July 26). Bats and human health.

<https://www.qld.gov.au/health/condition/infections-and-parasites/viral-infections/bats-human-health>

Wildlife Health Australia. (2024). WHA fact sheet: Hendra virus and Australian wildlife (v5.0).

https://wildlifehealthaustralia.com.au/Portals/0/ResourceCentre/FactSheets/Mammals/Hendra_virus_and_Australian_Wildlife.pdf

Wildlife Health Australia. (2025, July). Australian Bat Lyssavirus fact sheet.

https://wildlifehealthaustralia.com.au/Portals/0/ResourceCentre/FactSheets/mammals/Australian_Bat_Lyssavirus.pdf

Section 6: Coexistence and Exclusion

This section relates to when you have a bat roost. See [Section 3](#) to determine whether you have a bat roost. See [Section 1](#) if you have found a singular bat that is unlikely to be roosting. Many people happily coexist with bats that roost in their walls or roof spaces. Bats rarely cause structural damage, generally keep to themselves, and provide free insect control. Some households have had bats living in their roof for 20 years or more, sometimes without even realising they were there.

All bats in Australia are native animals that are protected under legislation and are important members of our unique ecosystems. If bats are simply left alone, they pose no risk to human health. No touch, no risk. We always recommend leaving bats in place where possible and enjoying their presence. However, there are some specific situations where exclusion may be necessary, such as during major building renovations or repairs. It is important to understand that it is not always possible to successfully exclude bats from a building, particularly from older houses or those with many gaps and access points.

Can I put something in my roof or surroundings to disturb roosting bats and encourage them to leave?

Many deterrents are suggested to drive bats away, including mothballs, peppermint oil, electronic rodent deterrents, spotlights, loudspeakers and ultrasonic deterrents. These methods are rarely effective.

Bats are highly habitual. When they find a safe roost, they are reluctant to abandon it. Most deterrents cause more irritation to the people installing them than to the bats themselves. Leaving lights on in a roof space overnight may help discourage bats during an active exclusion process, but bats often simply move to another part of the roof or building rather than leaving altogether.

Bats are native protected wildlife, and attempting to poison or deliberately harm them is illegal and can cause significant animal welfare issues. Poison should never be used.

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Can bat boxes replace a roost or encourage bats to move out of my house?

Installing a bat box does not cause bats to leave a building and should not be considered compensatory habitat for exclusion. Some species of bats may take up residence in bat boxes but often, this takes months to years, and many Australian species may never use them at all. Importantly, bats do not usually move into bat boxes as a result of exclusion, even when boxes are installed nearby.

Can I use rat baits to control rodents where bats are present?

Yes, but it is important to use caution. Do not use second-generation anticoagulant rodenticides (SGARs), such as brodifacoum, bromadiolone, difenacoum, or difethialone. These are highly toxic and persistent, and bats (or other wildlife) can be poisoned either directly by accessing bait or indirectly by eating poisoned rodents.

Instead, if you need to control rodents around buildings where bats are present:

- Use first-generation anticoagulant baits or alternative non-toxic methods where possible.
- Place and secure bait stations so bats cannot reach the bait or contaminated rodents
- Monitor bait carefully and remove it when no longer needed.

This approach reduces the risk of accidental poisoning to bats and other wildlife while still managing rodent populations safely.

Can you just send someone out to collect the bats and relocate the bat roost?

No. All bats in Australia are protected native animals, and physically removing bats from a building is neither feasible nor effective. Roosts often contain tens to hundreds of bats, many of which hide in narrow or hard-to-reach spaces. Attempting removal puts bats at high risk of stress, injury, and predation—and even if removal were attempted, it usually fails, as bats will often simply return if entrance points are not sealed.

Because roosts usually contain multiple animals, the safest and most effective approach is a humane exclusion. This involves assessing the roost, then working with a bat specialist to allow the bats to leave at night while preventing them from returning. Humane exclusions reduce risk to the bats and ensure compliance with legal protections.

BAT EXCLUSION

When might exclusion be necessary?

In some circumstances, such as building renovations, repairs, or unavoidable structural issues, a property owner may need to exclude bats from a structure. If exclusion is considered necessary, it is strongly recommended that you seek advice from a bat ecologist, wildlife care group or bat rescue organisation. The type of building, bat species present, number of entry points and time of year all influence whether exclusion is feasible and humane. Exclusion is not a quick fix. It can be time-consuming, technically challenging and may not succeed. In many cases, it cannot be completed in a single day and must occur over consecutive days or weeks to avoid trapping or injuring bats. Unauthorised or poorly planned exclusion can cause injury or death to bats and may result in legal penalties.

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What do I need to know?

Successful exclusion depends on timing, building design and careful monitoring and is not always achievable.

Legal requirements: Bats are native animals and are protected under various federal and jurisdictional legislation in Australia. In some instances, the bats roosting in your building may be listed as threatened and these have additional legal requirements. We recommend seeking advice from a bat specialist in your state to first determine what species are roosting in your building and what permits are required to exclude them from your building.

Step 1 - Planning (at least 1-2 weeks, possibly months depending on season)

If you need to exclude bats from your structure, the first step is usually contacting a bat specialist, wildlife care group or ecologist. Contact them early on during the planning stage of the project so that they can help you prepare for the exclusion. This is a process that requires time, so please don't leave it to the day of the disturbing work (if you have accidentally disturbed a bat roost, do not touch the bats, and call a wildlife rescuer immediately (see [Section 1](#)). The bat specialist will help you assess the situation, determine what bat species you have roosting in the structure and will help you determine whether you need a permit. Depending on the scope and nature of your project, there could be a fee for this assistance and permit.

There are ways to exclude bats from your home in a humane way that keeps both you and the bats safe. Considerations during the planning phase are:

What bat species are roosting in the building (multiple species may be present)? Are there legislative requirements for this species?

Where do they enter / exit?

- Locating all the entry/exit points the bats are using is essential in successfully excluding them. Holes in your roof that are stained with dirt, bat droppings on the ground or walls under the hole or watching bats leave at dusk help to determine the entry/exit hole.
- There are often multiple entry/exit points and some of these may not be used every night, so you might need to do multiple evenings of observations.

Are there any 'problem' areas for the residents?

- Where exactly is the problem area? Can bats be excluded from this area, but still have access to other areas of the house?

Seasonal timing of the works

- Avoid maternity season - this varies depending on the location and if unsure a bat expert should be consulted, but as a general guide for temperate regions it is generally from late October until the end of February, however bats further north particularly in the tropics will breed year round if the conditions are favourable. It is at this time bats are giving birth and their young are learning to fly. Any exclusion methods during this time will likely result in the mass loss of baby bats.
- For temperate regions, avoid very cold weather when bats are less active and may not leave roosts.

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Assess whether exclusion of the building is likely to succeed.

- How is the building / house built?
- Some houses will be much easier to exclude bats from than others. Mud brick homes are almost impossible to exclude bats from due to the nature of the build. Old houses with lots of holes/gaps into the roof/walls can also be extremely difficult.
- Can all of the entry / exit points actually be sealed / repaired to prevent bat re-entry?

Step 2 - Exclusion (~1-2 weeks)

Under the supervision of a bat specialist and with the appropriate permits, bats may be able to be excluded from a building. However, this is a tricky process that will require a staged approach and it is only successful in some situations. Simply sealing the holes that the bats are entering / exiting from is not recommended. This is likely to result in bats becoming trapped inside the roost and dying.

One-way door/flap systems have been found to be humane methods of excluding bats from roosts. This method allows the bat to leave as they normally would but prevents them from returning to the roost. It is a cost-effective and humane way to exclude the bats from your house without causing stress to the animals. It is important you contact an expert who can advise you on the best way to implement the one-way door for your specific case. A one-way door installed incorrectly will not successfully exclude the bats and may actually harm the bats. If installed at the wrong time of year it could also result in pups being trapped within the building.

Summary of important considerations when excluding bats from a building roost:

- Should only be undertaken after the planning considerations above have been addressed.
- To be undertaken under the supervision of a bat specialist / ecologist / wildlife care group
- Exclusion will not be an instant solution. Depending on the time of year, it may take a few days to a few weeks to achieve full exclusion. A staged approach to exclusion is recommended. Monitoring at dusk over multiple nights is essential, as additional entry points may be discovered. Only once a bat specialist confirms that no bats remain should entry points be permanently sealed.
- Do not just block holes from the outside. This will likely cause entrapment and death of bats in your roof. Even if you wait for bats to fly out at dusk, not all bats leave at the same time and they will also return throughout the night.
- Consider if you need to exclude bats from all entry/exit points in the building. Often there is a problem area that bats can be discouraged from and allowed to roost in other areas of the building where they aren't causing any problems.
- Install one-way door/flap devices and monitor their success. Monitor (usually on dusk), modify and install new devices as additional entry / exit points are detected. Once a bat specialist has confirmed that no bats remain (likely after weeks of monitoring), remove the one-way door/flap devices and seal the entry/exit points.
- Putting up a bat box will offer an alternative roost for some bat species, but will not cause them to leave your home and shouldn't be viewed as a solution or compensatory habitat.

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Can I seal up an outdoor access hole after I've watched the bats leave?

Eventually, but not on the first night. Not all bats in a roost necessarily leave every night/ at the same time. Installing one-way systems at the right time of year and over consecutive nights in consultation with a bat specialist can assist in removing bats permanently from a roost while reducing the risk of entombing bats that may not leave on a given night.

Section 7: Bat Waste/Cleaning Up

How do I safely deal with bat droppings, urine stains or guano?

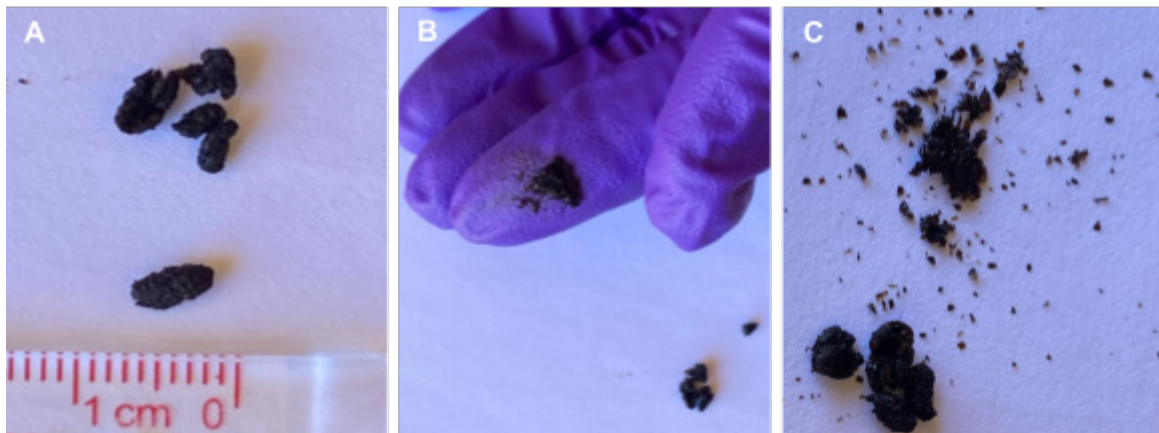
If you have bats roosting on your property, you might have noticed evidence of their nightly insect control in the form of tiny pellet droppings – usually concentrated underneath or within wherever they are roosting.



Bat droppings accumulated under a bat maternity roost at building on a vineyard in Margaret River, Western Australia (Photo by Kelly Sheldrick).

Bat droppings are often confused with mouse droppings, but you can tell the difference by doing a 'squish test' (wearing gloves) on a dry pellet – if it easily crumbles apart into shiny debris (comprising the exoskeletons of insects), it's likely a bat dropping (see photos below). If it holds its shape instead of disintegrating, it's likely a rodent dropping. Gecko guano can look similar to bat, however tends to be harder and shinier but with no insect fragments and sometimes with a whitish tip (uric acid) that looks like a little chalky tip on one end.

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A: Approximate size of a bat guano pellet (note: size varies between species). B: Squished bat guano pellet showing shiny debris inside. C: Squished pellet next to other bat guano pellets for comparison. Note: Rodent pellets will not squish and do not contain shiny debris, making this a useful field test to distinguish bat guano. (Photo credit: Kelly Sheldrick)

Will the guano make me sick?

Where bats are roosting in a place with good airflow and/or exposure to elements (such as under your eaves or in an open-bottom bat box), the guano is typically not a cause for concern. This is because bat droppings are often blown away or break down quite rapidly in outdoor spaces. The risk posed to you in this case is similar with that of most animal droppings or soil – so, always wash your hands with soap and water if you happen to touch or handle the droppings and use warm water and soap to clean affected surfaces.

If bat droppings are allowed to build up in enclosed spaces, the environment may create favourable growing conditions for a fungus known as *Histoplasma capsulatum*.

Histoplasma capsulatum is a common fungus found in soil across most of the world. It thrives in organic-rich soils that have little disturbance, and is most common in old chicken coops, pigeon houses, and caves (where bird or bat guano has accumulated for many years). In the right conditions, accumulations of bat guano within a building could also grow this fungus. If soil containing the fungus is dry and dusty, and this dust is then inhaled, there is a risk of inhaling its spores. Inhaling spores can lead to a non-contagious respiratory infection called *histoplasmosis*. This infection is most commonly found in farmers, poultry keepers, pest control workers, and cave spelunkers.

Most people who contract histoplasmosis have few or no symptoms and recover without issue. *However*, immunocompromised people can be at risk of more serious health effects from the infection – so it is recommended to take measures to protect yourself whenever working in or cleaning out spaces where the fungus could occur.

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How do I safely clean with bat droppings, urine stains or guano?



If you have bats roosting on your property, you might have noticed evidence of their nightly insect control in the form of tiny pellet droppings – usually concentrated underneath or within wherever they are roosting.

Where bats are roosting in a place with good airflow and/or exposure to elements (such as under your eaves or in an open-bottom bat box), the guano is typically not a cause for concern. This is because bat droppings are often blown away or break down quite rapidly in outdoor spaces. The risk posed to you in this case is similar with that of most animal droppings or soil – so, always wash your hands with soap and water if you happen to touch or handle the droppings and use warm water and soap to clean affected surfaces.

If bat droppings are allowed to build up in enclosed spaces, the environment may create favourable growing conditions for a fungus known as *Histoplasma capsulatum*. Preventing build-up of organic matter in any enclosed space is the best way to minimise the risk of histoplasmosis exposure. If you have a chicken coop or a bat roost on your property, it's recommended to regularly clean out droppings to prevent accumulation. In most cases* you can safely manage this yourself by following the steps below.

**If you have a major historical accumulation of guano in a place that is difficult to access, such as decades-old accumulation in a roof cavity, we recommend engaging a professional rather than attempting this yourself.*

Before cleaning - wait for the bats to leave

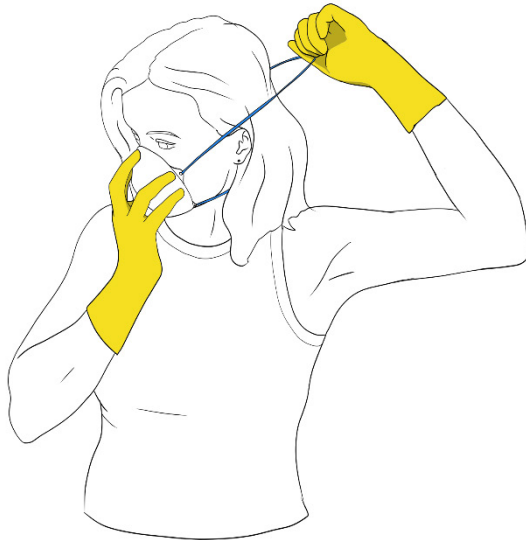
Check that the bats are not in the roost as you go to clean, so you do not cause them stress. You may need to clean at a certain time of year while they're roosting elsewhere, or, clean at night. Take care to check for any pups (baby bats) in the roost (bats still in the roost at night).

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Cleaning up guano

Step 1: Put on PPE

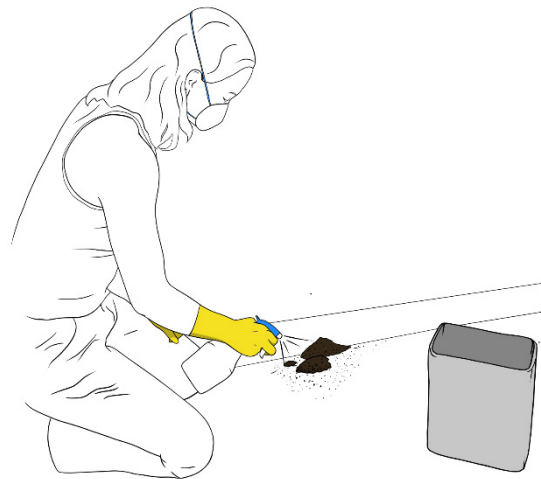


1) PPE

Put on your personal protective equipment (PPE) - gloves and a P2 mask.

Cleaning up guano

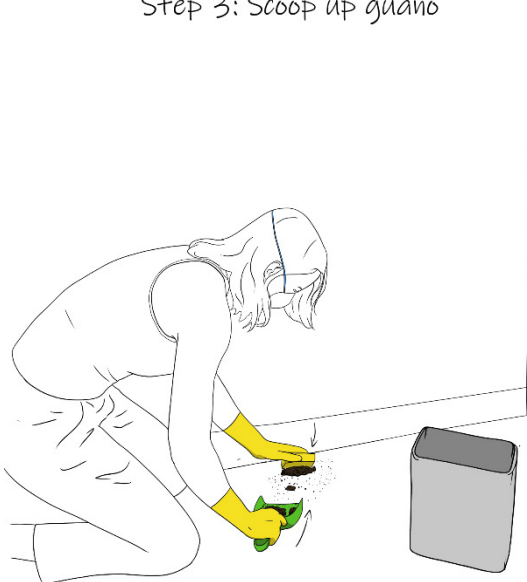
Step 2: Dampen droppings



2) Wet the droppings

Spray the accumulated droppings to trap dust - you want enough moisture so the guano is like soil (not dusty), but not so much water that it becomes runny mud.

Step 3: Scoop up guano



3) Scoop the droppings

Scoop up the droppings into your bag or bucket, taking care not to stir up dust. If the guano is in a thick and particularly dry pile, you may need to re-apply water as you go.

Cleaning up guano

Step 4: Tip into bin



4) Dispose of wastewater and guano

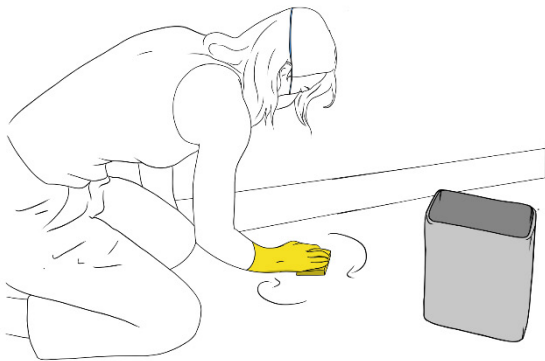
Pour the dirty washwater on to your garden or lawn. For the guano, you can choose to either add this to your compost or garden (it is a fantastic fertiliser), or double-bag and place it into your general waste bin.

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Cleaning up guano

Step 5: Wipe with warm soapy water



5) Wipe down the area

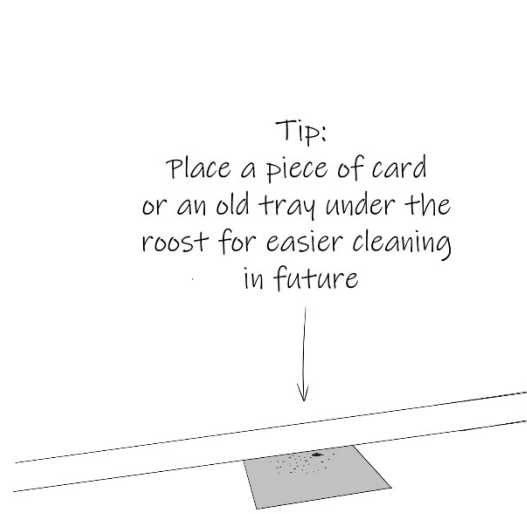
After you have scooped up what guano you can, use your sponge and warm soapy water to wipe down the area, cleaning the sponge in the water as needed.

If you have undertaken exclusion work to prevent bats from getting back in, you may use a disinfectant or bleach solution to clean the area - but please do not use harsh chemicals in an

Cleaning up guano

Tip:

Place a piece of card or an old tray under the roost for easier cleaning in future



6) Dispose of washwater and guano

Pour the dirty washwater on to your garden or lawn. For the guano, you can choose to either add this to your compost or garden (it is a fantastic fertiliser), or double-bag and place it into your general waste bin.

What about bat urine?

Like guano, if bats are roosting in an open-air environment such as under your eaves, their urine is generally not a cause for concern – however, if there are many bats roosting in an enclosed space, an unpleasant ammonia smell may develop over time. The cleaning advice above applies the same.

Excluding very large and old roosts, bats living in a building typically do not cause water staining or ceiling/wall damage. In almost all cases, water staining/damage is caused by roof leaks, rodents, or possums.

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Section 8: Pets and Bats

What should I do if my cat (or dog/ pet) catches or brings home a bat?

If your pet catches or harms a bat, it's important to act quickly and safely - for your safety, your pet's health, and the welfare of the bat.

Follow these steps:

1. Do not try to separate your pet from the bat with your hands.
 - If the bat is still in your pet's mouth, calmly encourage the pet to drop it by calling them away or using food/treats as a distraction.
 - Avoid touching either animal during this process.
2. Once the bat and pet are separated:
 - If the bat is alive:
 - Do not touch or handle the bat. Instead, contact your local wildlife carer or wildlife rescue organisation for immediate advice and assistance.
 - If moving the bat is unavoidable, do not touch the bat with bare hands. Use thick gloves e.g. leather gardening gloves, cover with a thick towel, or gently contain the bat in an upturned ventilated box (e.g. with small air holes). Place the box somewhere quiet, dark, and safe from pets and people.
 - If the bat is dead:
 - Place it in a sealed container (using a shovel or long tongs) and contact your local vet to see if they're involved in Australian bat lyssavirus (ABLV) testing. Alternatively, you can contact your local bat carer, bat ecologist or museum to see whether the specimen can be used as part of any bat conservation and research. You can also safely dispose of dead bats in a plastic bag in a garbage bin.

What is the risk to your pet?

The risk of Australian bat lyssavirus (ABLV) infection in domestic pets is extremely low.

To date, there have been no confirmed cases of ABLV in cats or dogs in Australia. The only domestic animals found to be infected with the virus have been two horses (Annand et al., 2014).

However, if your pet has had contact (or suspected contact) with a bat, it's important to take precautions and always contact your veterinarian for advice. You may also wish to report the incident to your state or territory biosecurity authority. If you suspect your pet was bitten or scratched, check your pet carefully for any wounds or signs of a bite or scratch, and wash the area immediately and thoroughly with soap and water.

For general animal health concerns, call the National Emergency Animal Disease Watch Hotline on 1800 675 888.

My cat keeps catching bats - what can I do?

Cats are one of the most common predators of bats (bats.org.uk) and they often learn where bats

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roost and will return there to catch bats as they leave the roost, often taking a significant proportion of the colony (Moyses et al 2023). To prevent/reduce the chances of this happening you can keep your cat/s indoors or in a cat-specific outdoor enclosure. Additionally, this can minimise the risk to your cat from vehicle accidents and damage from cat fights and other injuries.

(Bat.org.uk)

For more information on responsible cat ownership please visit:

- [CLAWS](#)
- [Responsible cat ownership](#)
- [Further information on cat ownership and impact](#)

Resources and further reading

Annand, E.J.; Reid, P.A. (2014). Clinical review of two fatal equine cases of infection with the insectivorous bat strain of Australian bat lyssavirus. *Australian Veterinary Journal*, 92, 324–332.

Australian Bat Lyssavirus: Information for Veterinarians. (2020, accessed July 2025). Queensland Government.

<https://www.publications.qld.gov.au/ckan-publications-attachments-prod/resources/d580174f-ec8d-4ab5-9bdc-95ffced669e2/ablv-information-for-veterinarians.pdf>

Bats QLD. (n.d.). Found a bat. <https://www.batsqld.org.au/found-a-bat/>

Jessie Moyses, Craig Grabham, Kyle N. Armstrong, Chris G. Knuckey & Brighton D’Rozario. (2023). Feral cat predation of the threatened Pilbara leaf-nosed bat – a key threatening process. *Australian Mammalogy*, 46, AM23049. <https://doi.org/10.1071/AM23049>

Bats.org.uk. (n.d.). Cat attacks. <https://www.bats.org.uk/about-bats/threats-to-bats/cat-attacks>

Kirkland, P.D.; Gabor, M.; Poe, I.; Neale, K.; Chaffey, K.; Finlaison, D.S.; Gu, X.; Hick, P.M.; Read, A.J.; Wright, T. (2015). Hendra virus infection in a dog, Australia, 2013. *Emerging Infectious Diseases*.

Westbury, H.A.; Hooper, P.T.; Selleck, P.W.; Murray, P.K. (1995). Equine Morbillivirus Pneumonia – Susceptibility of laboratory animals to the virus. *Australian Veterinary Journal*, 72, 278–279.

Section 9: Supporting and Attracting Bats

How can I help or attract bats to my property?

Supporting and attracting bats is a great way to contribute to local biodiversity, reduce insect numbers naturally and provide habitat in urban and rural environments. Whether you’re hoping to encourage bats to stay or want to support those already visiting, here are some steps you can take:

Protect natural roosts

- Retain old trees with hollows. These provide essential roost sites for many species
- Avoid removing large trees or dead limbs unless absolutely necessary. Natural hollows can also be salvaged from fallen timber and reattached to trees.
- If bats are already roosting on your property (e.g. in a shed, roof, or wall cavity), consider how to:
 - Limit disturbance during the day
 - Reduce traffic directly beneath the roost
 - If bat droppings are a concern, use catch trays under problem areas and see [Section 7](#) for information on cleanup.
 - Maintain the structure around the roost so it remains secure and weatherproof.

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Make your garden bat-friendly

Plant native species that flower at night to attract insects (food for bats). Local wildflower groups may have suggestions on native evening flowering plant. Some other options include:

- *Callistemon* spp. (Bottlebrush)
- *Melaleuca* spp. (Paperbark)
- *Eucalyptus* spp. (Gum trees)

Avoid pesticides and insecticides - these reduce insect availability and may poison bats indirectly. In some instances, provide a water source such as a shallow pond or water dish with sloped edges. Keep outdoor lights off at night or use motion-sensor lighting to reduce insect disruption and disorientation for bats.

Install bat boxes

Bat boxes (also called microbat roost boxes) can provide safe roosting alternatives - especially where natural hollows are scarce. However, bats may take months or even years to move in, and boxes must be carefully designed and placed to ensure bats that use them are safe from predators and not subjected to extreme temperatures.

Use boxes with:

- Narrow entrances to exclude predators
- Internal grooves for climbing
- Thermal regulation
- Room underneath for safe entry/exit

Keep boxes well maintained and check for pests, decay or intruding animals like sugar gliders or birds. Consider multiple boxes of different designs to improve your chances of success. For design ideas, see these resources:

ABS Bat Box Guide

https://www.ausbats.org.au/uploads/4/4/9/0/44908845/tuttle_et_al_2013_bat_house_builders_handbook.pdf

Bat Conservation International – Bat House Guide

<https://www.batcon.org/about-bats/bat-gardens-houses/>

The bat box roost kit: https://bats.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/bat_roost_box_v4i.pdf

Consider creative roosting alternatives

In parts of Australia (especially south-east), bats like the eastern broadnosed bat or little forest bat are often found roosting in pool umbrellas.

- If you're open to sharing, you can "donate" a spare umbrella or mop head as a seasonal roost.
- If you'd prefer not to encourage this, keep umbrellas open at night or stored in inaccessible areas once bats have left.

Keep pets indoors

Domestic cats are a major predator of bats. Keeping cats indoors (especially at night) helps protect both bats and other native wildlife. See [Pet and Bat Safety FAQ – [Section 8](#)] for more advice.

Join or support local habitat projects

Join a local bushcare or habitat restoration group. Sign up for your Council's Land for Wildlife program - these offer habitat advice, rate rebates and support for wildlife-friendly property management.

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Section 10: Learning More About Your Bats

How can I learn more about the bats on my property?

Understanding the bats you see at home (or hear at night) is a great step toward appreciating and protecting these animals. Australia is home to over 80 species of bats, ranging from tiny microbats to large flying foxes. While some roost in your roof or nearby trees, many simply pass through on their nightly hunt for insects or nectar.

Flying foxes (megabats) are large fruit-eating bats with wingspans of up to 1 metre. They have long faces, large eyes and don't use echolocation. You're more likely to see them flying at dusk in large groups, especially near flowering or fruiting trees.

Insectivorous bats (Microbats) are much smaller, often smaller than your hand. They are insect-eating, echolocating bats that fly as they hunt. You might not see them clearly but can spot them darting under streetlights or around your house catching insects.

Here's how to start identifying and learning more about the bats in your area:

- The **Australian Bat Society's Bat Finder** tool lets you explore bat species known to live in your local area: [ABS Bat Finder \(by location\)](#)
- **Atlas of Living Australia:** Browse recorded bat sightings in your region. <https://www.ala.org.au>
- **iNaturalist:** Upload photos or recordings and get ID help from the community. <https://www.inaturalist.org>
- **Facebook groups** like [Australian Mammal Identification](#) or the Australian Bat Identification page [<https://www.facebook.com/groups/663929627394101>] can also help with bat identifications,- especially if you've found one roosting or grounded.

For more resources on bats for the classroom or community, check out the resources <https://www.ausbats.org.au/bat-resources-for-kids.html> and bat fact sheets <https://www.ausbats.org.au/bat-fact-sheets.html>

Keep an out for an Australasian Bat Night event near you <https://www.ausbats.org.au/bat-nights.html>

Acknowledgements

This guide was written by Bats in Buildings working group which comprise bat carers, ecologists, researchers, and members of the Australasian Bat Society Executive. We thank to those that reviewed the final copy and to Wildlife Health Australia for review of some sections.

Disclaimer:

While we aim to provide the most up-to-date and accurate information, research and learning about bats is ongoing. Bats are native and protected species under Australian law. Actions that harm or disturb bats, or fail to comply with legal requirements, may have legal consequences. The information provided here is for general guidance only, and we cannot be held responsible for any outcomes, including legal or welfare issues, resulting from the actions of others. If you notice information that could be updated or have feedback, please contact webmanager@ausbats.org.au.