

BATS IN ALBERTA



Big Brown Bat
(*Eptesicus fuscus*)

The big brown bat is probably the most common bat in southern Alberta, particularly in the vicinity of Lethbridge and Medicine Hat.

The number of individuals gradually declines in the northern regions. Big brown bats roost in colonies, often in schools, houses, and barns. Adult big brown bats weigh 15 to 25 g (0.5 to 0.8 oz) and have a wingspan of 30 cm (12 in). Big brown bats are relatively sedentary. They use an aggregation of roosting sites within a small local area and usually forage within 3 or 4 km of their day roost. Flight patterns and feeding activity are consistent among members of the local population and often are associated with concentrations of night-flying insects. Big brown bats are able to tolerate cold better than most bat species. A few individuals have been found in environmental temperatures of -15°C; however, usually they hibernate before such extremes are reached. Although few details are known about the hibernation of big brown bats in Alberta, it appears that buildings are the preferred sites. (*They are the only species of bat known to hibernate in buildings in Alberta*).



Hoary Bat (*Lasiurus cinereus*)

The hoary bat is the largest bat found in Alberta. Adults may weigh up to 35 gm (1.2 oz) and have a wingspan

of 40 cm (16 in). Their long narrow wings provide a strong, powerful, and rapid flight. The body and inter femoral flight membranes are covered with thick dark brown or black hair. Many of the individual hairs are tipped with white, giving a "frosted" or "hoary" appearance.

Hoary bats are solitary individuals which roost in areas of forest cover. During the day, they are concealed among the leaves or on the bark three to four metres (10-12 ft) above the ground.

Hoary bats appear to prefer evergreen trees, and could live throughout the boreal forest zone of Alberta. The bats leave the trees after dark to feed on nocturnal flying insects, often high above the canopy.



Little Brown Bat
(*Myotis lucifugus*)

The little brown bat is the most common bat in Alberta. The provincial population is estimated at 1 to 1.5 million.

The adult females are relatively conspicuous as they roost together in colonies in occupied or unoccupied buildings throughout the province. The colonies are common in central Alberta and may be found in houses, schools, churches, garages, barns, shopping malls and office towers.

Females are usually larger than males. On average, adult little brown bats weigh approximately 8.5 g (0.3 oz) and have a wing-span of up to 20 cm (8 in).



Long-eared Bat
(*Myotis evotis*)

The long-eared bat as the name implies, is characterized by long ears which extend well beyond the tip of the nose when gently laid forward. The ears are black. This bat is a western species restricted largely to mountainous regions although a few colonies have been found in the prairies. The preferred habitat appears to be coniferous cover high in the mountains of British Columbia and Alberta.



Long-legged Bat
(*Myotis volans*)

The long-legged bat is common throughout western North America. However, it is morphologically similar to the little brown bat and often misidentified. Long-legged bats can be distinguished by thick hair extending on the underside of the wing to a line from the elbow to the knee and by the presence of a keeled calcar (a small bone extending laterally from the ankle).



Northern Long-eared Bat
(*Myotis septentrionalis*)

The northern long-eared bat is distributed widely throughout Canada but seldom is seen. In western Canada, it is restricted to the boreal forest areas. Specimens have been collected in Alberta from Edmonton, Cadomin, Peace River, High Level, Edson, Spruce Grove, and Wood Buffalo National Park. Northern long-eared bats look very much like little brown bats. They

differ in having long ears which extend up to 4 mm beyond the end of the nose when laid forward.

During the summer these bats roost in a variety of shelters, including trees, caves, and occasionally buildings. Tall mature trees, alive or dead, are preferred and the bats often use cavities created by birds or crawl under loose bark on the trunk of the tree. Like the small-footed bat, this species is quite tolerant of cold and in winter prefers to roost singly in narrow crevices near the entrance of mines and caves. Northern long-ears are a gleaning species and prefer to snatch insects directly off the surface of leaves or tree branches. Thus they tend to be active within the forest canopy layer.



Red Bat (*Lasiurus borealis*)

The red bat is an infrequent visitor to Alberta. They are solitary bats which roost in thick forest cover. During the day the bats hang by one foot from the base of a leaf, giving the appearance of a dead

leaf. This behavior may provide some protection from predation by blue jays, hawks and owls. Red bats are one of the brightest-colored bats, ranging from bright orange to light rusty brown. Adult males are usually redder, while females are "frosted" with white. They are a moderate size, weighing 7 to 12 gm (0.3-0.4 oz) and have a wingspan of up to 30 cm (12 in.). Red bats are well-adapted to living in an environment of fluctuating temperatures. The tail membranes are thickly furred and can be used as a

blanket to cover the bat during hibernation.



Silver-haired Bat (*Lasionycteris noctivagans*)

The silver-haired bat is a noncolonial woodland bat which is rarely found in buildings. Though widely distributed in North America, it is most abundant in the northern Rockies. Silver-haired bats are distinguished by their size — they have a wingspan up to 30 cm (12 in); color — black wing membranes and dark silver-tipped hair; and flight - slow and leisurely, often close to the ground. They are strong fliers and some migrate seasonally from Arizona to northern Alberta. Silver-haired bats use tree roosts during the summer. They may be found as individuals or in small groups under bark, in abandoned bird's nests, in hollow trees, or hanging upside down amongst the leaves throughout the forests in central Alberta.



Western Small-footed Bat (*Myotis ciliolabrum*)

The western small-footed bat is relatively common throughout regions of Alberta, British Columbia, and Saskatchewan. It is easily confused with other myotis species and can be identified reliably only after extensive experience. Nursery colonies have been found in caves and crevices in

rock faces and clay banks. This species may be widespread in the badlands and arid river valleys in the Milk River area. It has been collected sporadically in southern Alberta. The western small-footed bat is a hardy species. Individuals hibernate in narrow crevices near the mouth of caves. Here the temperature often dips below freezing yet the small bats appear to be well adapted to the cold and dryness.

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