PNW PEST PRESS

Bats in Schools

IPM IN SCHOOLS

Spring

Little Brown Bat. Source: Wikimedia Commons

Bat nursery. Source: Wikimedia Commons.

Washington's Bats

Washington state is home to many bats that are healthy and vital to our ecosystem. There are 15 documented species of bats in Washington. Common species include the little and big brown bat, the Yuma and California myotis, and the pallid bat. All of Washington's bats are insect eaters. None feed on blood. They play a critical role in controlling harmful insects by eating vast quantities of them. Bats are also important pollinators. Bats hibernate during the winter, usually from October through March, or migrate to regions where insects are available. Hibernation sites include large trees, caves, tunnels, and attics. Bat pups are raised in nursery colonies and are unable to fly on their own until late summer.

Rabies

Rabies is a disease caused by a virus that infects the brain and spinal cord. The rabies virus can infect humans and other mammals, including dogs and cats. Rabies can be prevented in dogs and cats through regular rabies vaccination. The disease in people can be prevented if treatment is given before symptoms appear. If untreated, rabies almost always leads to death. In Washington state, bats are the only known source (reservoir) of rabies. The rabies virus can be spread to people through a bite or scratch from an infected animal, or from their direct saliva contact with a mucous membrane or broken skin. Most bats do not have rabies, but all contact with bats should be avoided.

Other Health Considerations

Established bat colonies can create large amounts of droppings called guano. Disturbing guano in some parts of the country can cause a fungal disease called histoplasmosis. Bat guano can also contain bacteria and cause allergies from being aerosolized. Large guano piles should be cleaned up and disposed of by a professional.

What is Integrated Pest Management (IPM)?

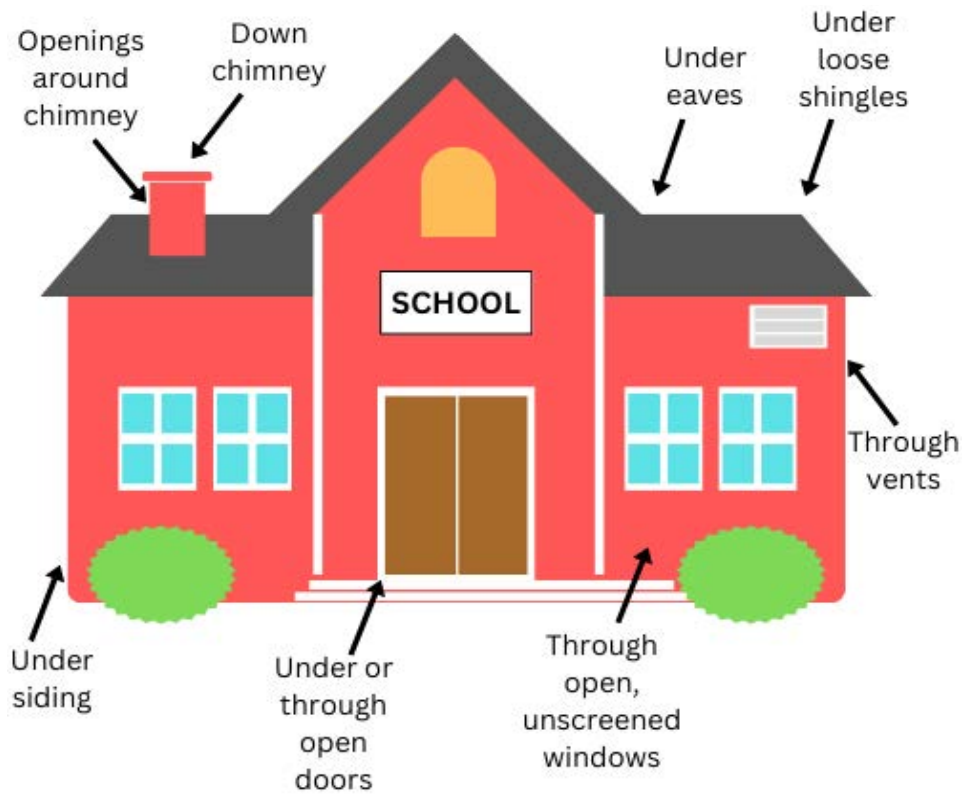
IPM is a way to manage pests that focuses on prevention. IPM can achieve long-term pest prevention and control with minimal impact on human and environmental health. The key steps of IPM are: (1) **Inspect**; (2) **Identify** the problem or pest; (3) **Act** - take appropriate action; and (4) **Evaluate** the results. Pest prevention requires communication and education so that staff are aware of conditions that attract pests and know how to minimize them. Appropriate sanitation, proper food storage, clutter reduction, and minor changes to staff habits will **minimize conditions that attract pests.**

For more information, ask about your district's pest management plan and IPM policy.

How To Bat-Proof Your Building

First, identify entry points. The figure at right shows common bat entry points into a building. Bats can fit through openings as small as a quarter. They may enter through holes around a roof, unscreened windows, or vents. Look for signs of bats. Watch for bats emerging from the building at sunset and dirt stains at entry points from high use.

If no bats are present in the building, seal up entry points between mid-October and mid-March when bats are hibernating. Block all entry points with caulking or another sturdy barrier. Additional instructions on bat control and cleanup can be found on the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) website.



Bat entry points into a building (source: DOH).

What Can You Do?

1. Do not feed or handle bats. If you see a bat, leave it alone. Teach children to tell an adult if they find a bat. Report wildlife observations to the WDFW.
2. Keep bats out of buildings by bat-proofing (see above).
3. Raise bat awareness! Post this "Don't Touch Bats!" flyer (PDF, also available in Spanish). Celebrate International Bat Night, August 30-31 and International Bat Appreciation Day, April 17.
4. Bat houses may be helpful, but the risks should be considered in each case. Contact WDFW or a bat expert.

What To Do if You Find a Bat

Prevent people from touching the bat. Contain the bat so that others cannot come into contact with it (close windows and doors to the room). Avoid bats that are not acting normally, such as lying on the ground or flying during the day.

If you think a bat may have touched, bitten, or scratched someone, immediately wash the site with soap and water. Contact your local health department and health care provider right away. Bat bites may be too small to see.

If a nuisance bat or colony needs to be removed or excluded from a building, contact a local wildlife control operator. Find a list of operators on the WDFW website. Never trap bats inside a structure. This is needlessly cruel and can create a serious odor problem.

If you must move a bat on your own, or want to let a bat leave a building, proper precaution is needed. Instructions can be found at the WDFW website.

Use this QR code to learn more about rabies in Washington.

More Information About Bats

Bats Northwest
https://www.batsnorthwest.org

Bat Conservation International
https://www.batcon.org

Washington State Department of Health
https://doh.wa.gov/public-health-provider-resources/notifiable-conditions/rabies-resources – see K-12 resources

Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife
https://wdfw.wa.gov/species-habitats/living/species-facts/bats

More Information About School IPM

Washington State Department of Health (DOH): Schools - Enhance Safe and Healthy Environments
https://doh.wa.gov/schoolenvironment
Email: schoolehs@doh.wa.gov

Environmental Protection Agency: Managing Pests in Schools
https://www.epa.gov/ipm

The National Pesticide Information Center (NPIC) provides objective, science-based information about pesticides and related topics to enable people to make informed decisions
http://npic.orst.edu
Email: npic@ace.orst.edu

Written in collaboration with:
Alexandra Boris, Washington DOH
Liz Dykstra, Washington DOH

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