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How high off the ground should a bat box be

email facebook linkedin twitter pinterest Awareness and interest in attracting bats to the yard and garden is no coincidence. Not only are bats fascinating creatures, but they also provide considerable natural pest control. Bats eat enormous quantities of insects (up to 50% of their body weight every night), including agricultural and forest pests as well as mosquitos. Of the eight species of bats in New Hampshire, two of them: little brown and big brown bats, can often be enticed to take up residency around human dwellings. Successfully attracting bats to the backyard requires quality foraging habitat and good roosting sites. With populations of tree cavity roosting bat species like little and big brown bats in decline due to the effects of White Nose Syndrome and habitat loss, properly constructed and placed bat houses can be an important factor in assisting their survival. Buying a Bat House Bat houses can be found for sale at a great number of locations, but they're not all created equally. Many bat houses are poorly designed and constructed and are unlikely to attract many residents. According to Bat Conservation International, effective bat houses are at least 20 inches tall and 14 inches wide, have numerous roosting chambers inside, and a three to six inch landing area at the base. If you have any doubts about which bat house to purchase, consider buying from a BCI certified vendor. If you have some carpentry skills, it's also fairly straightforward to construct your own bat house. Placement Proper placement of the bat house is just as important as good design. Temperature has a huge impact on whether bats will use a bat house or not. Without exception, bat houses should be placed in areas that receive at least eight hours of direct sunlight every day. Bats are far more likely to roost in houses that are very warm and get a lot of sun. In New Hampshire, where the climate is relatively cool, bat houses that are painted black or very dark brown are used more often than ones that are light colored or natural wood, simply because they create a warmer environment. Bats prefer houses that are mounted on buildings to those mounted on poles or trees. Buildings help increase and moderate the internal temperature of the bat house and also provide some protection from the weather. Bat houses placed in trees are usually less successful due to a few factors; they generally receive less sun, branches make it harder for bats to enter and exit, and predators have easier access. Once you know where and how you want to mount your bat box, you need to make sure that the house is far enough above the ground or other obstacles such as shrubs. The bottom exit of the bat house should be at least 12 to 20 feet from the ground or tallest vegetation. Bats tend to drop six to eight feet when they leave bat houses and won't use houses that are lower than 12 feet. In addition, bats like to do much of their foraging near bodies of water such as ponds, lakes, or streams. Siting the bat house near any of these features will increase its likelihood of being used. Supporting insect diversity in your backyard by encouraging the growth of native vegetation will also improve bat habitat. Maintenance Bat houses do require some annual maintenance to keep bats using them year after year. Paper wasps often create nests in the roosting chambers, and bats won't use any slots with nests present. Make sure to clean out wasp nests in the late winter or early spring before the bats return to your backyard. Bat houses will may also need to be repainted or stained periodically as the color chips or fades over time. Move-In Period Sometimes it takes bats a little while to find and start using a new bat house. Young bats don't disperse to new habitats until late July or early August, so you may find that your bat house doesn't get many occupants until later in the season. It can sometimes take a year or two for bats to find new bat houses, particularly if there isn't currently a large population in the area. If after two years your bat house still isn't getting any use, try moving it to another location. Got questions? The Ask UNH Extension Infoline offers practical help finding answers for your home, yard, and garden questions. Call toll free at 1-877-398-4769, Monday to Friday, 9 a.m. to 2 p.m., or e-mail us at answers@unh.edu. Tags Question of the Week Infoline Instagram If you've been having mosquito or insect control issues, then buying a bat house may be on your mind. Bat houses offer one of the best ways to control mosquitoes throughout your backyard and property. Just like everything else in life - you have to install a bat house properly for it to work. Sady, this is where many people end up going in the wrong direction. Many cheap bat houses don't offer any advice about where to put a bat house in your yard. At Big Bat Box, we understand that your bat house is worthless without proper installation. So we dove into the details and developed a system. Using this unique system, we can help you attract more bats than ever before. More bats equal less mosquitoes and insects. But don't take our word for it! Just listen to what one of our satisfied customers had to say after installing a Big Bat Box: "Your bat house came highly recommended from my brother in law. We last counted 70 bats...talk about bug control. We went from constantly needing bug spray to needing absolutely nothing - ever. Thanks for making and selling these!" - Dave, Colorado Alright, let's dive in and find out where to put a bat house in your yard! Where to Put a Bat House in Your Yard We're confident in our bat attracting systems here at Big Bat Box, but we must point out one thing. Bats are wild animals. There's no guarantees in the bat house game. By following these directions, you simply give yourself the absolute best chance at attracting bats. Here's exactly where to put a bat house in your yard: Ideally, you have a natural source of water within 1,500 feet of your property. If you do, then there's a great chance you'll attract more bats than you could ever imagine. Do you have a stream, lake, pond, creek, or other source of natural water nearby? If you do, you're in luck. We'll try to place the bat box as close to the water as possible, but at least 25-50 feet away from the shore. This also means you can buy a big bat box. Bats form colonies near water. As such, you'll have a great chance of filling a Big Bat Box with up to 200 bats or more. If you don't have a natural source of water within 1,500 feet, that's ok. You can still attract tons of bats, but you'll need to take a different route. First, you'll want to invest in 1-3 bachelor bat boxes. These smaller boxes can house up to 20 bats at a time, all bachelors. This means a colony won't form around your property, but you can still get over 60 bats living on your land with these types of bat boxes. That's more than enough bats to completely eliminate your mosquito issues. To entice bachelor bats, make sure you have some type of artificial water source fairly close to the houses. Koi ponds and birdbaths both do well here. Trees play an important role in where you'll place your bat house. Bats houses must be at least 20-30 feet away from any tree line. Why? Because bats do NOT like to be near tree branches. Tree branches make it easy for predators to snack and prey on bats all day. If you have a tree line, not just a few trees, then you'll want to place the boxes about 20 feet ahead of the tree line as close to the water source as possible. We're getting close to finding the perfect place for your bat house. Think about it like this: Bats need a lot of heat to survive, especially at night. There's a reason hundreds of bats sleep together in one tiny house. It's because they can stay warm together through their body heat. They like bat houses for this reason. To ensure you attract more bats, make sure your bat house is facing SE or SW. When facing in these directions, a bat house will receive ample sunlight during the day. Many locations will get 2-8 hours of sun when facing these directions. The sunlight will warm the bat house up to an ideal temperature for bats. As well, a warm bat house will attract mama bats looking to nest. Female bats refuse to nest in locations they deem too cold. A bat house should generally be 12-20 feet off the ground. Bats like to be far away from other animals and humans, especially predators like cats. We've found a height of 20 feet tends to be ideal. If your home can meet all the conditions laid out above, then mounting the bat house on your home isn't a bad idea. However, most homes aren't perfectly situated to attract bats. Thus, other options should be considered. Most people find mounting their bat house on two 20" posts to be ideal. By using posts, you give yourself a great deal of flexibility when thinking about where to put a bat house in your yard. This flexibility typically results in more bats if you do things properly. While this doesn't have a lot to do with location, the color of the bat house will help attract bats, too. See, paint color plays a huge role in how hot and cold the bat house gets - and we already know how important temperature is for female bats. As such, you'll want a bat house that's painted darker in cool climates. In warmer climates, a light color is ideal. Where to Put the Perfect Bat House: Everything You Need to Know By following the instructions above, you'll give yourself the absolute best chance to attract bats. Put your Big Bat Box in the proper location and you may find more bats on your property than you could have ever imagines. The best way to do just that? 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