

How and Where to Mount your Bat House

Mount your bat house in an open area where bottom is sixteen to thirty feet off the ground or nearest obstruction. The area in front of the bat house should be clear of trees. Bats need a “swoop zone” and nearby tree branches reduce sunlight and interfere with flight patterns. Bat houses should not be placed near tall trees that might provide a convenient perch for predators like owls and hawks.

Free-standing poles are an ideal choice for mounting a bat house. A variety of poles are available. Caribbean Utilities Co Ltd (CUC) for reasons of safety, asks that bat houses NOT be mounted on their poles that are being used to carry electricity, however, they do supply poles for the Bat Conservation Project.

Mr. Ron Moser of The Machine Shop, has designed a very strong method of joining two bat houses to fit on a CUC utility pole, and samples of this method can be seen throughout Grand Cayman. Contact **Cayman Wildlife on LIME Wildlife Hotline – 917-BIRD** for an assessment of your project and to find out what kind of pole is right for your bat house.

The side of a two-story building is a good choice. The bat house should be set out from the building an inch or two on small pieces of wood to ensure that droppings do not soil the side of the building. It should not be mounted over windows, doorways, decks or walkways. It should not be shaded by an overhanging roof. Some experts suggest tilting the bat house out slightly at the bottom (10 degrees or less) to help prevent baby bats from falling out. Bear in mind that droppings will be falling out and will build up on the ground underneath. West-facing bat houses attract more bats here.

Guano or bat droppings will collect under the bat house and can be mixed with soil or water to make a very good fertilizer. Do not use full-strength unmixed guano or you may “burn” the plants. The guano that falls from bat houses are dry and harmless, but as with any animal droppings, don’t breathe in the dust when working with them.

Cayman Wildlife sells finished bat houses (when available) and provides free plans for those who would like to build their own. We will make a free visit to your site to consult with you about the best location and way to mount your bat house.

When your bat house becomes inhabited, (usually in November) please call us on 917-BIRD and let us know. Bat houses are experimental in the tropics and your information is needed. You can count the bats as they leave just at dusk each evening and let us know how many bats are using your bat house. All Cayman Islands bat houses are monitored and yearly reports are filed with Bat Conservation International in Austin, Texas.

Call the LIME Wildlife Hotline - 917-BIRD or visit www.caymanwildlife.org or email info@caymanwildlife.org for a free inspection of your property and advice about where and how to mount your bat house.

KEYHOLE METHOD – for Wall-mounted Bat Houses

1. Cut a “keyhole” in the back of the bat house with two different-sized drill bits. The bottom of the hole should be the exact size of the bolt you are using and the top section should be the exact size of the shaft of your bolt.
2. Screw the bolt into the side of the building, leaving about half an inch protruding.
3. For a masonry building, use masonry screws called quarter-inch tap-con or a lag bolt and shield. For a wooden building, use galvanized deck screws.
4. Push the bat house on to the bolt through the larger bottom half of the keyhole. Pull it down, securing the smaller top half around the shaft of the bolt.
5. Secure the bat house on the bottom by screwing through the landing pad.

BRACKETS

Brackets can be screwed to the back of the bat house, or a piece of one-by-four or two-by-four board can be used as a bracket. Be sure to use the proper size screws, so that no sharp points poke inside the bat house to tear the bats’ delicate wings.

ON METAL POLES

Metal poles can be purchased from local hardware stores. The most economical poles we found were 20-feet by 2-inch at A.L. Thompson’s for about \$40 each. Two of these poles can support a bat house, but it is recommended that if using this type of poles, two bat houses be mounted back-to-back on them. This provides more temperature choices for the bats and the space in between the two bat houses can be roughened and sealed with marine sealant to provide an additional crevice for the bats to use. A roof can be put over both bat houses to strengthen the structure and to create the look of a single unit. Poles should be buried in cement that is several feet deep.

UTILITY POLE

CUC is a partner in the bat house has been very generous in donating poles to the Bat Conservation Project. These poles are usually placed in areas visible to the public and accessible to CUC’s equipment. They are not usually available for private gardens, but exceptions have been made. Sometimes wires have been removed from existing poles and bat houses can be placed atop them. Check with the Bat Conservation Project if you think you have a usable pole in your garden.

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