

## Bat Roost Etiquette

Although some bats sometimes persist in using a roost site despite disturbance from humans, many bat species abandon their roosts after minimal disturbance. In addition to talking loudly, certain noises occur at frequencies that are especially disturbing to bats and these include whispering, Velcro, and rustling nylon material. For hibernating bats, repeat disturbance can cause mortality. In hibernaculum, activities such as whispering, talking, equipment banging and other disturbances such as lights and flashbulbs will arouse hibernating bats. Arousal from hibernation increases use of stored energy reserves. Bats only have enough fat stored to go into and out of torpor a few times each winter. Repeat disturbance causes bats to use all their fat stores. Once fat stores are depleted, bats can go into torpor but are unable to come out of torpor and die as a result.

Following are tips on how to minimize disturbance to roosting bats.

- ☾ When roosting bats are observed, it is best to leave the roost immediately.
- ☾ Strive at all times to disturb as little as possible roosting, foraging, or other activities of bats. At roost sites stay as far away from the bats as possible. Keep lights, flash photography, noise, and other activities in the vicinity of a roost to a minimum. Although some bats sometimes persist in using a roost site despite attempts to discourage them, many others abandon their roosts after minimal disturbance.
- ☾ If you are observing roosting bats do it from a distance using your binoculars when possible. If you must approach or pass close by them try to do it in small, quiet groups each with just one light (or no light, if possible). Speak in a very low voice but do not whisper as whispering is more disturbing to bats. Groups talking or laughing loudly, banging equipment, shining a dozen bobbing lights, and all snapping several dozen photographs will be serious disturbances to almost any group of roosting bats.
- ☾ Refrain from visiting maternity roosts during nursery season (May through July). This is one of a bat population's most vulnerable periods because such disturbance is likely to cause young bats to lose their grip and fall to the floor, thus increasing injuries and deaths. It may also cause roost abandonment. Observation of exits, entries, etc. can be made from outside the roost site.
- ☾ Do not disturb, much less awaken, hibernating bats; this requires staying out of bat hibernaculum altogether. Lights, noise, flashbulbs, etc. will arouse hibernating bats. Arousal from hibernation increases use of stored energy reserves and may thus decrease the time a bat can stay in hibernation. This depletion of energy reserves and shortened hibernation may result in the bat awakening too early in spring, reducing its chances for survival.
- ☾ Do not throw objects into sinkholes. Sinkholes are used by roosting bats year round and stay outside of fencing designed to keep the public safe while protecting bats.