



MANAGING CONFLICTS WITH BATS

Definitions:

Wildlife Control Agent – Any individual who engages in wildlife damage control or wildlife removal activities, including bat eviction, for compensation, including reimbursement for the cost of materials, and procures a wildlife control agent license issued by the NC Wildlife Resources Commission (NCWRC).

Depredation Permit – Permit issued to an individual that authorizes lethal take of wildlife that are causing damage or pose a safety issue.

Eviction– The process of getting bats out of an area where they are unwanted or where they pose a risk to human health.

Exclusion – Securing the area that the bats were using such that they can no longer access the roost site causing them to move to a more appropriate location.



Big Brown Bats (Johnny Wills, USFS)



Bat exclusion device

Authority of Wildlife Control Agents.

Wildlife Control Agents (WCA) are considered agents of the NCWRC and may issue depredation permits to individuals to control most problem wildlife. WCAs may charge for their service, removal, or other mitigation work, but they may not charge for the permit itself. WCAs cannot issue depredation permits for any endangered, threatened, or special concern species listed in 15A NCAC 10I .0103 - .0105; coyotes in Beaufort, Dare, Hyde, Tyrrell, or Washington counties; big game animals, including Black Bear, White-tailed Deer, and Wild Turkey; elk; and bats. Only NCWRC staff can issue permits for those species.

Unique Considerations Relative to Bats

Depredation permits that authorize lethal take of bats are rare for a variety of reasons:

1. Take of bats is not necessary to solve most problems associated with bats roosting in a building. Bat eviction and exclusion techniques are the most effective and efficient methods of removing bat colonies and preventing recolonization.
2. Bat species are difficult to identify and are often not entirely visible when roosting. Nine of the state's 17 bat species are listed as state special concern, threatened, or endangered. These rare species could easily be confused with more common species.
3. Seven bat species in the state are susceptible to the fungal disease, White-nose Syndrome, which has caused population declines exceeding 90% in some species in western NC where the disease is prevalent. These species have become incredibly rare, so additional threats should be minimized to aid population recovery.

9 of the state's 17 bat species are listed as endangered, threatened or special concern so bat eviction and exclusion techniques are the desired methods for removing unwanted bats permanently.

Process for Eviction and Exclusion

Many bat species form colonies during warm seasons to facilitate reproduction and because many species are highly social. These colonies, often referred to as maternity colonies, sometimes roost in buildings because buildings provide shelter and safety from predators. Bats tend to access buildings through small openings in the building's exterior, such as loose screens on gable vents, under loose shingles and roof decking, or through loose or broken siding.



Big Brown Bat maternity colony in house attic

The process for eviction and exclusion is as follows:

1. As soon as the bat roost is identified, all potential access points from the bat roost to the living space should be sealed to separate human occupants from bats.
2. Bats will use the same entry point to exit the roost at dusk to forage. Once this entry point has been identified, the building should be inspected for other areas of potential entry and those should be permanently sealed or, in addition to the identified entry point, one-way devices can then be installed that allow bats to exit the roost but prohibits reentry. Since not every individual is guaranteed to forage each night, the device is left in place for multiple consecutive nights to ensure all bats have exited the roost.
3. The entry points can then be permanently sealed using caulking, hardware cloth or other appropriate building material. The eviction and exclusion process can be complicated and requires knowledge and attention to detail to safely and effectively complete. If not done properly, the outcome could pose a risk to human health or lead to unnecessary, unlawful take, or allow for recolonization. For these reasons, bat evictions for compensation must be conducted by certified Wildlife Control Agents (GS 113-273(l)) and the Commission has the authority to develop bat eviction and curriculum for Wildlife Control Agents (GS 113-333(d)).

Why are Wildlife Control Agents restricted from this work without approval from May – July?

The timing of the pup-rearing season varies across regions of the state. The NCWRC defines the season as May 1 through July 31 and WCAs are prohibited from performing bat evictions and exclusions during this time. Eviction measures rely on the ability of bats to fly off, presumably to a new roost, and pups are not able to accomplish this prior to Aug. 1. Exceptions to this prohibition are approved by the NCWRC on a case-by-case basis. Considerations for evictions and exclusion during this time are generally related to human health risks associated with bats entering the living space.

Allowing the maternity roost to persist and focusing on excluding bats from the living space from May 1 to July 31 protect both bats and human health.

Conducting evictions and exclusion during this window can lead to undesirable consequences such as:

1. Adult bats tenaciously seeking alternative ways to get to the pups, like through the living space of the house, which can pose a threat to human health.
2. Hungry pups wandering to find food, possibly entering the living space or dying inside of walls, also posing a threat to human health.
3. Unnecessary lethal take of bat pups.

