

# How to Take an Urban Bat Walk



## BAT WALKS AT DUSK

Dusk is the best time to look for bats because it's not yet too dark to see but dark enough for bats to have left their roosts. Be on the lookout for bats about 15 minutes after the sun goes down. The best time to see bats is on a warm summer night when there are lots of flying insects.

In most parts of North America, bats can be seen in spring, summer and fall. (Bats in these areas will hibernate or migrate when the temperatures go below freezing). In the city, look for bats hunting around lights on streets, playgrounds, football or baseball stadiums, parking lots, or parking garages. You can also look for bats near open water such as lakes, rivers, canals, and ponds.

Do not touch a bat if you come close to one. Bats are timid creatures but will bite in self-defense. Make sure not to shine a flashlight directly at the bat as it is flying. The light may change the bat's foraging behavior or make it easy prey for predators.

## BAT OR BIRD?

How can you tell if you are seeing a bat or a bird? Some birds, like swallows and martins, have similar silhouettes and are also out at twilight hunting for bugs. You can tell the difference primarily from the way they fly:

- Birds glide between flapping, holding wings close to their bodies.
- Bats rarely glide and, if they do, will usually have their wings extended while they fly.
- Birds usually fly in a straight direction while bats have a more erratic, swooping flight pattern.
- Nocturnal birds, like nighthawks and owls, are typically much bigger than North American bats. Most bats in North America have a wingspan of 8 to 14 inches.

## BAT WALKS WITH A NATURALIST

Check with your local nature center, museum, zoo or other educational institution to see if a bat expert is able to lead a bat walk.

People who study bats often carry bat detectors that translate bat echolocation into sounds humans can hear.

You can also buy a personal bat detector if you want to identify your neighborhood bats by sound.

## BAT WALKS IN THE DAY

Most bats hide from predators during the day while they sleep and therefore can be hard to find. If you live in a city, you may see crevice-dwelling bats, such as the Big Brown bat and the Mexican free-tailed bat in a house, dead or dying tree, rock crevice, beneath a bridge, or under the eaves of buildings. Look up--bats usually are up high, in a warm, dry, dark location.

Some solitary bats use camouflage to keep themselves safe, usually by blending in with the color of a tree. For example, the Hoary bat often roosts in evergreen trees and uses its brown, white and yellow coloration to hang unnoticed. Other solitary bats, like the Red bat, hang in maple trees from one foot, curling up in a ball and pulling their furry tail membranes over their heads to look like a leaf.



For more information about bats, visit [batweek.org](http://batweek.org) and [batlive.pwnet.org](http://batlive.pwnet.org)

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