

Build Your Own Bat Cave



Building a bat cave can be a great way to educate and energize kids to learn about bats and underground habitats, leading to conservation of both. Once made, it can be used for many events over multiple years. Decorate the inside of the cave with stalactites, stalagmites, and cave animals. Please highlight the following messages during this activity:

- Bats are important for the economic benefits and ecosystem services they provide
- Cave bats are threatened by human disturbance and white-nose syndrome
- Individuals can help by educating friends and family

CAVE MATERIAL OPTIONS:

1. The Project Underground curriculum has detailed plans for an inflatable plastic bat cave, called the “Barefoot Cave,” and accompanying activity. Materials for this cave include 20-foot by 80-foot 6 ml black plastic, 10 rolls of two-inch clear packing tape, and one high-speed box fan. This option can be modified to accommodate smaller venues. The basic construction is one large piece of plastic on the top, one large piece of plastic on the bottom taped together on the sides leaving an opening through which the box fan blows air, and participants can enter. This is an indoor activity during the summer—preferably with air conditioning. The black plastic cave is a solar oven outside.
2. Modify a camping tent to create a bat cave. This option does not require electricity. Contact your local outdoor store for tents that are returned with defects for donations. Remove the rain fly and replace with a dark brown or black material or tarp to block out the light. Add more than one tent to connect caves and provide an entrance and an exit. Use a soft material for a crawl tunnel to connect the tent caves.

DECORATIONS:

- Make stalactites and stalagmites out of crepe paper, paper straws, mailing tubes, paper towel rolls, construction paper, felt, or Styrofoam.
- Spread sand on the floor for a natural effect
- Buy or make wildlife models that inhabit caves and place them throughout the cave (e.g. plastic spiders or raccoons)
- Create question and answer cards for kids to discover in the cave

INFLATABLE CAVE RULES:

- No shoes allowed
- At least one adult volunteer inside at all times
- At least one adult volunteer at the entrance at all times
- No running inside the cave



For more information about bats, visit batweek.org and batlive.pwnet.org

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ACTIVITIES:

Participants make their own craft bat and write their name on it. The adult volunteer then explains about cave safety and hands out equipment. Students crawl through the opening with their flashlights and helmets to enter the cave. Students or adult volunteers serve as guides to explain the formations and why bats live in caves. Cave sounds can be played on a portable speaker. The leader may also have a laptop computer or tablet to show cave bat pictures or video. Students can sit on the ground and take notes in their journals and ask questions. If time allows, the leader can read a bat book or have the students read on their own with their flashlights. Participants can tape their craft bats to the ceiling of the cave before leaving.

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TAKE-AWAY:

Outside the tent, review the messages and ask the kids about their experience.



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