

Do Something Positive for Bats this Bat Week

For Immediate Release

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SMITHERS, BC. Halloween images of spooky bats and blood-sucking vampires are classically fun. However, they have also created fear and misconceptions about these important animals. International Bat Week is from October 24 - 31st, and it's a great time to bust some myths. The BC Community Bat Programs are encouraging everyone to learn a fact or two about the 15 species of bats that live in British Columbia.

"Host a Bat Week Party or other special event to get others excited about bats," says Carlie Quinn, Skeena Region Community Bat Program coordinator. "You can feature bat-themed games or trivia, a bat costume contest, and foods and drinks in the shape of moths, mosquitos, or other insects as this is what our bats eat here - anything to highlight our amazing bats!" The bats in BC are major predators of insects, devouring many insects that are considered pests to our forestry and agricultural industries. This makes them an important part of our economy as they provide millions of dollars worth in natural pest control.

"If you want to make handing out candy more entertaining, how about developing some bat trivia for the kids?" says Quinn. You can find more information on bats at www.bcbats.ca or at www.batweek.org.

Contact your local nature centre, museum, or public park offices to see if they are offering any bat talks. Take your kids or grandkids to your local library and sign out bat books or a Bat Pack. Some library Bat Packs come complete with an echometre bat detector device, providing borrowers an opportunity to develop an understanding, appreciation and support for bats. Check out Halloween Trivia at Smithers Brewing Co, Wednesday October 30th. Sign up at the Brewery! For more information reach out to Quinn at Skeenabats@gmail.com.

"Most bats in BC only have one pup per female in the summer and they face many threats to survive," says Quinn. White-nose Syndrome is a disease that has killed millions of bats in eastern North America. It is caused by a fungus that attacks them in winter when they are hibernating. It does not affect people or other animals.

"People can help us monitor bat populations by keeping an eye out for winter bat activity or dead bats. If you find one, report it," says Quinn who also cautions to never touch a bat with bare hands or allow your pets to contact it. The Skeena Region Community Bat Program is working with BC government biologists to collect and test dead bats in order to detect White-nose Syndrome. It has not been found in BC yet, but it is in Alberta and just south of BC, in the Seattle area. Please report dead bats online at www.bcbats.ca, call 1-855-922-2287 ext. 19, or email skeenabats@gmail.com.

Bat Week also marks the time of year when bats disappear from our neighbourhoods, until the return of warmer weather in spring. As insect-eaters, our BC bats must leave their summer roost sites and migrate or hibernate to survive the winter. This absence means that this is the time of

year to do home renovations that you have delayed due to bat presence. You can clean out and repair a bat box, or do bat-friendly exclusion work, without disturbing or injuring bats.

The BC Community Bat Programs provides information and promotes stewardship and citizen science in partnership with the BC Ministry of Environment, and funded by the Habitat Conservation Trust Foundation, Forest Enhancement Society of BC, and Habitat Stewardship Program. For more information, please visit www.bcbats.ca or find us on Facebook under Got Bats? BC Community Bat Project.

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Contact:

Carlie Quinn, Skeena Region Community Bat Program coordinator
T. 1-855-922-2287 ext. 19
C. 250643.4264
E. skeenabats@gmail.com
www.bcbats.ca
Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/bcbats>
Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/gotbats/>

Photos:

Clean out your bat box in fall or winter while the bats are away hibernating. Photo by Marge Sidney.

Little Brown Myotis are endangered due to White-nose Syndrome, a disease that has decimated bat populations in eastern North America. Report winter bat activity or dead bats to www.bcbats.ca. Photo by Greg Michalowski.

Celebrate Bat Week. Learn about the 15 species of bats that live in BC by visiting www.bcbats.ca, going to the library, hosting a bat party, or visiting an educational display or talk in your area. Photo by Paula Rodriguez de la Vega.