

Many Australian microbats roost under bark or in hollows in trees, but some species find cavities in buildings to be a great place to roost. You might find bats in any kind of building that has an access point such as a hole or gaps in walls and ceilings.



The Lesser Long-eared Bat (*Nyctophilus geoffroyi*) is a common species found roosting in buildings.

Photo: Michael Pennay

Is it dangerous to have bats in my home or buildings?

Not at all! Bats that roost in houses are insectivorous (eat insects), and are not dangerous to humans or pets. In fact, they help control populations of insects.

Their droppings are not known to be a source of disease, and will quickly dry with little or no odour. A small percentage of bats carry Australian Bat Lyssavirus, a rabies-like disease. It can only be transmitted via saliva from an infected bat. If you do not handle bats, you should not be at risk.

Microbats are clean and sociable animals that will not nibble or gnaw wood, wires or insulation. All they are after is a place to rest. Left to their own devices, microbats can be fine house guests.

How can I remove a bat from inside my home?

- If bats have flown into the living area of your home, encourage them to leave by opening windows or doors at night.
- If you need to catch a bat, place a towel or t-shirt over it and pick it up gently, to prevent getting bitten. Place the bat on a tree trunk or a wall, at dusk or after dark.
- Make sure cats are controlled so that they don't catch the bats (remember, all Australian bats are protected under federal and state legislation and may not be harmed in any way).
- Prevent bats from re-entering living areas by blocking any gaps between the interior and the ceiling or wall cavities. Common sites are next to chimneys, exposed beams in cathedral ceilings and gaps between ceiling lining boards. These gaps can be blocked with cloth or paper (bats won't remove these materials) or sealed with expanding foam.



Gould's Long-eared Bats (*Nyctophilus gouldi*)

Photo: A Natural History of Australian Bats - Working the Night Shift

Got bats? Look for these clues:

- Noisy squeaking as the bats interact with each other
- Smell of urine
- Droppings on the ground or walls

Love bats but don't want them in your house?

Provide the bats with an artificial roost box near your home. Be sure to install it before excluding them from your building, so that they can move right in!

Fun Fact!

The term "bats in the belfry" comes from America, and means crazy, eccentric ... or batty!





The Southern Free-tailed Bat (*Mormopterus planiceps*) commonly roosts in buildings
Photo: Lindy Lumsden

Why do microbats use buildings? I thought they only lived in caves or trees!

In Australia most microbat species roost in trees, while others roost in caves. Suitable tree roosts are often found only in large old trees, as the cracks and hollows that microbats use take a long time to form. These tree roosts are often destroyed by people 'over-tidying' dead wood or removing old trees from their properties. In the face of this housing shortage, some microbat species will seek refuge in buildings instead.

How do I get bats out of my ceiling or walls?

1. If you need to exclude bats from a building, this should only be done during the bats' active season, but not during the breeding season - consult an expert in your region. Winter in southern Australia should be avoided as bats may be hibernating.
2. Identify exit points by watching at dusk to see where bats emerge from the building, and by closely inspecting possible exit points. Look for staining around frequently used routes, or droppings stuck to the surrounding area, or on the ground below.
3. Seal all the exit/entry points except one. If bats are entering under the ends of corrugated iron roofing, you can obtain corrugated closure strips from hardware stores.
4. The remaining entry/exit point can then be made into a one-way exit by creating a smooth vertical surface around the exit point, to make it impossible for the bats to grip and climb back into the building.
5. Leave the one-way exit in place for at least a couple of weeks and only seal the final exit point once you are sure all the bats have left.



A colony of bats roosted behind the window frame, leaving the tell-tale sign of droppings on the wall.

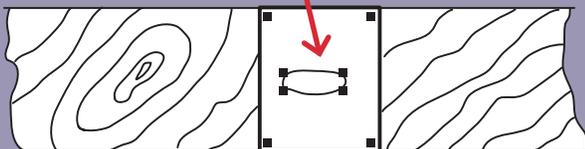
Photo: Lindy Lumsden

How can I recognise microbat droppings?

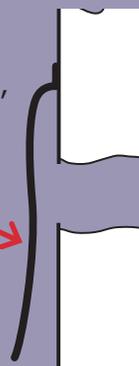
Do the crumble test! Roll a dry dropping in a piece of tissue between your finger and thumb - if it feels hard then you probably have mice, not microbats. A microbat dropping will crumble quite easily - this is because it is made up of insect parts from its dinner the night before!

Two ways to make a one-way bat flap

1. Attach a plastic shield over the exit hole, extending at least 80 mm from the hole to ensure a non-grip surface.



Then hang a flap of plastic sheeting over the exit point, so that bats can leave but not re-enter.



2. Attach a plastic bag over the exit point, open end downwards with a hole cut in the side of the plastic bag that is against the exit.

Looking for more information about bats?
See our fact sheets:
www.ausbats.org.au