

Bat Stewardship Project

The Securing a Home for Bats in the Milk River Watershed is an exciting new project that has started for 2022. The purpose of this project is to identify and document important roost sites being used by the Little Brown Myotis throughout the watershed. Ultimately, the goal is to develop an inventory of this species to understand population trends overtime, monitor the presence of disease (specifically White Nose Syndrome), and collaborate with private landowners to increase awareness of the presence of these bats on their properties.

Background

The Little Brown Myotis (*Myotis lucifugus*), or more commonly known as the Little Brown Bat, is a small flying mammal that inhabits much of North America and is a resident species throughout Alberta. These bats have historically been widespread and abundant throughout much of North America, however, the emergence of White Nose Syndrome (WNS), a fungus that attacks bats during hibernation, has taken a huge toll on populations throughout the south and east. While the fungus has not yet been identified within Alberta, it is estimated that the disease will make it's way north into the watershed within the next few years. For this reason, it is imperative that more research be conducted to document populations for these bats within the watershed to monitor changes to these numbers and detect the presence of WNS for mitigation purposes.

Project Objectives

The primary goal of this project is to conduct roost and hibernacula surveys across the watershed with landowners. This will allow for us to document the populations, critical roost habitats, and recommend best practices and enhancements for Little Brown Bats. Through this research, we will be able to provide educational outreach to watershed residents and present our findings to community forums and events. Additionally, we will be distributing multi-chambered bat houses to landowners who we collaborate with throughout the duration of this project, as well as establishing a bat condo to bolster bat habitat throughout this region.

Current Progress

As this project has only just started as of January 2022, we are currently in the process of reaching out to interested landowners. Through some outreach efforts, we hope to establish some confirmed sites for surveying once the early spring arrives.

Project Partners

This bat stewardship project is funded by Environment and Climate Change Canada. We would like to thank all of the landowners who have agreed to work with us on this project and allowed access to their properties.

If you are interested in learning about more opportunities to assist in this project, please contact Allison Choquette at allison@mrwcc.ca.

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