



Things to Know When Hiring a Bat Exclusion Professional



Photo credit: J. Paul White
A little brown bat roosting in an attic.



Photo credit: Dave Bree
Dave Bree, president of Wisconsin Wildlife Control Operators Association, at work.

*Interview with Dave Bree,
President of Wisconsin Wildlife Control
Operators Association*



Bats in Wisconsin roost in many different places in summer including attics and homes. While the goal of the Wisconsin Bat Program is to protect bats and bat habitat, we understand that bats don't need to share living spaces with humans. We strive to provide accurate and useful information about effectively and safely excluding bats from buildings while considering the biology of the species and what time of year bat exclusion is best done. We provide information on how to do an exclusion yourself, and providing alternate habitat, however we realize many people prefer to hire a wildlife control operator to exclude bats from their home. Dave Bree, president of the Wisconsin Wildlife Control Operators Association, answered some of the

most common questions homeowners have about bat exclusion.

1. What is the usual process operators follow to exclude bats from a building?

In most instances, a phone interview with the property owner provides some valuable information. How long have they owned the property? How long have they known they've had a bat problem? Have any bats been getting into the living quarters of the home? What type of home do they have, ie: ranch, 2-story, split-level, etc.

An on-site inspection is the next step. During the inspection we look for two things. First, we want to know the location of the "primary entry point(s)"—where bats are gaining access into the home. It could be one entry point or multiple entry points. Once we have identified the primary entry point(s) we look for areas where a bat could get beyond the exterior of

the home if it wanted to. Any gaps or holes as small as a quarter-inch wide could allow a bat to squeeze through. We refer to these areas as "secondary entry points." At this point, an estimate for sealing up the home and excluding the bats can be provided.

During a bat exclusion, the secondary entry points are sealed up first. Once we're certain bats can't find a different way into the home we can address the primary entry points. The primary entry points are fitted with what is referred to as a one-way door, or excluder. An excluder allows bats to exit the home but not re-enter. Bats actually end up evicting themselves from the building. Depending on the weather, it may take a few nights for all the bats to exit the home. Once we feel they've had enough time to leave, we remove the excluders and seal up the entry points permanently.

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2. How long does an exclusion usually take?

How long the actual work takes depends on the size of the home, how easily it is to work around the home, and how much needs to be sealed. Most homes can be sealed up and the excluders installed in a day or two. How long it takes for all the bats to exit the home depends on the weather and time of year. If we have warm stable weather most bats will usually vacate the home in just a couple of nights. Severe weather at night may limit bat activity and they may need some additional time to leave. Late fall bat exclusions, into October, may require that excluders be left on until it warms up again in the spring to make sure bats have had enough warm weather to remain active and vacate the home.

3. Knowing that each job can present different challenges, can you talk in general terms about how much an exclusion usually costs?

This is always a popular question when discussing a bat exclusion with a property owner. It is difficult to provide an exact number without seeing the property first. However, an experienced wildlife control operator that has done enough bat work should be able to at least provide a range. Knowing the type of home, age, condition, type of attic ventilation, pitch of the roof, number of rooflines and dormers, type of siding, chimneys, etc. can usually provide enough information to give a ballpark figure. Bat exclusions on ranch style homes typically start at around \$500. On larger multi-story homes the price climbs due to roof pitch, height of work, difficulty getting around on ladders, etc. It is not uncommon for a bat exclusion on a 2-story home to begin in the \$2,000 range and go up from there. If the home requires vent-guards over the attic vents, the ridge vent needs to be secured or the chimney requires a chimney cap, and these all add to the final cost. Other factors that drive the cost of a bat exclusion include whether any special materials are required for the home, any additional equipment such as a lift is needed, and if there is landscaping or other buildings that

need to be worked around. These all contribute to the amount of time required to properly seal up a home.

4. What would you look for in a bat exclusion company?

Most importantly, you need to confirm that whomever you hire has adequate liability insurance. You do not want someone working on your home without knowing that you, and your contractor, are protected against any damage or injury. Secondly, you want to make sure the company you hire knows what they are doing. Excluding bats is meticulous work. If you leave bats an opportunity to find another way in, they will take advantage of it. I always tell homeowners there are two ways to do a bat exclusion: you either do it right or you can do it again. So try to find a company that has bat training and certification. It is also important to hire a local company. You want to be assured that if something doesn't go exactly to plan—and it can happen—that the company you hire will be there to honor their warranty. Finally, be sure you are comfortable with whomever you chose to work on your home. If you are skeptical of what you're being told, or have an uneasy feeling talking with someone, get a second opinion.

5. What is the busiest season for bat excluders?

Being in a northern climate, bat work is usually not done during the winter in Wisconsin. So those calls of bat activity during the winter can be scheduled for inspections once the weather warms. Bat exclusions ramp up in April and May. The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources prohibits wildlife control operators from doing bat exclusions from June 1 through August 15. This period is regarded as the maternity season for little brown and big brown bats. To avoid excluding female bats from a roost and having all the pups die off, wildlife control operators wait until all the pups are able to fly and find their way out through the excluders. From August 16 until colder weather sets in is the busiest time for most wildlife control operators who exclude bats in Wisconsin. We have a short

period to get as much bat work done as possible. Bat inspections and preliminary work can be done all summer long. But once the maternity season has concluded, that's when the bulk of the work is completed.

6. In your experience, what is the most common entry point for bats?

If a home has dormers or multiple roofs, the area where a soffit from an upper roofline meets the shingles on the roof below is a popular place for bats to gain access into an attic. In this situation, the soffit seldom meets the shingles below flush. So if there is even a small gap, bats will land on the roof and crawl between the soffit and shingles. Also, wherever you have two different types of building materials that meet, it is common to find gaps that bats will take advantage of. It could be where a brick chimney meets vinyl siding or where a plastic ridge vent isn't fastened tightly to the shingles underneath.

7. Where is the best place to find a bat exclusion company?

There are many places wildlife control operators advertise and market their services. In years past, printed phone directories were a popular place to search for companies in your area. However, in recent years the trend continues to favor online advertising. Being able to use a search engine and find information is so much more convenient than using a printed phone book. As we get older, fewer and fewer young adults even have a phone book. A good place to start a search for a local wildlife control operator is the web site for the Wisconsin Wildlife Control Operators Association. Go to www.wwcoa.net to find a list of companies and area of the state they serve. We only list companies that have passed our certification test and have shown to have liability insurance, so hiring a company on our list will provide you with a local operator that has been certified and should be insured.

