

GETTING BATTY IN MARIN



The Townsend's big-eared bat is a species of concern in Marin County.
Credit: National Park Service

Seldom seen and often misunderstood, bats are actually great to have around. Who else do you know that can eat their weight in bugs each night, including mosquitoes and garden pests?

But despite how important they are, Marin County's bats remain shrouded in mystery. What kinds of bats live here? Where are they found? Where do they go to find food? Where do they sleep during the day? Where do they raise their young?

These are the things we need to know to make sure we're looking after our bats and the places they need to thrive.

Unfortunately, many bat species in the U.S. are in decline and several are listed as endangered. Seven of Marin's bat species are of special concern. The biggest threat to bats here is habitat loss or change, making the need to know more about the places they depend upon especially important.

MARIN'S AGENCIES GOING TO BAT

For the second year in a row, a group of federal, state, and local partners are in Marin's forests and fields, and hitting neighborhood streets to learn more about where these important creatures live. Repeating this project in multiple years will allow us to capture the mystery of Marin's bats as they reveal it to us over time. What we learn here will also be shared with the North American Bat Monitoring Program, which tracks bat status and trends nationwide.

Hoary bats are one of the species found in Marin County in last year's surveys.
Credit: National Park Service





Biologists are catching and releasing bats in Marin's parks to learn more about which species travel through these areas and to assess their overall health. Credit: Janet Klein

LISTENING

In June and July, we are placing microphones that pick up the high frequency noises bats make as they hunt at 31 park and open space sites around Marin. Different bats make different sounds, so this will tell us which species are feeding or traveling in these protected areas.

QUESTIONS?

If you'd like to know more onetam.org/bat-monitoring or contact Lisette Arellano LArellano@OneTam.org

LOOKING

Over the next couple of months, you may see people holding large antennas leaning out of the windows of slowly moving cars. They are tracking bats caught and fitted with small temporary radio telemetry tags as they hunted in the evening along state and national park creeks.

The tagged bats may travel beyond our parks to farms, commercial areas, or people's yards. By following them we learn a tremendous amount about the kinds of places they prefer to sleep and rear their young. We can also count the numbers of bats that emerge from roost sites at dusk and learn more about their behavior.

SMELLING?

No, we won't be sniffing after them, but bats across the U.S. have been hit with an emerging disease very aptly named white-nose syndrome for white fungus that grows on their faces as they hibernate.

This lethal disease has caused huge declines in bat populations in the Eastern U.S. It was recently found in Washington State but it has not yet been detected in this area. However, learning more about where bats here roost during the winter, and if they hibernate, may help us understand how local bat populations will be impacted if white-nose syndrome arrives here.

One Tam is a partnership of

