MERLIN TUTTLE'S
BAT CONSERVATION

Bat House Seal of Approval Instructions for Applicants

Overview

In an effort to be price-competitive, an unfortunate number of manufacturers market bat houses that are inadequately designed or made of unsuitable material. Also, even the best constructed houses can fail due to inadequate instructions regarding placement, sun exposure, or color choice. Merlin Tuttle's Bat House Seal of Approval strengthens confidence in customers wishing to purchase a quality product. The seal is a visible commitment, assuring both manufacturer and purchaser that the product meets the criteria expected by experienced professionals.

General Guidelines for Construction

Successful bat house construction comes in many forms. The following specifications serve as general guidelines for construction. Requirements necessary to receive approval may vary.

1. Roosting chambers must be ¾-1" wide (front to back). The best crevice size for most North American bats is ¾". Houses may have up to 1.5" chambers, provided they are specifically built and marketed for larger species such as pallid or Florida bonneted bats. Advertising must also state that 1.5" chambers are more attractive to wasps and other non-target animals, requiring more frequent monitoring. In multi-chamber houses, we will accept one rear chamber of 1.25" in recognition of potential use by big brown or free-tailed bats.

2. Roosting chambers must be at least 14" tall (20" or more is preferred) and at least 14" wide. "Rocket style" houses with continuous (360°) chambers are an exception. Depending on materials used, bat houses with roost chambers wider than 16" may require spacer blocks between partitions to prevent warping. Proven designs of different spacing (in width and/or height) may be considered on a case by case basis.

3. Bat houses must include a landing area, extending at least 4" below the entrance (6" preferred), or partitions may be recessed 3-4", such that bats may land on the inside, protected from owl attacks.

4. All interior and landing surfaces must have adequate texture to provide footholds for bats. Surfaces may be hand-scored, mechanically cross-cut, or covered with heavy-duty mesh (e.g. Gutter Guard). For plywood, grooves must not penetrate beyond the outermost lamination, which is normally approximately 1/8" thick. In non-laminated lumber, grooves can be 1/8" deep at ½" intervals. If used, mesh must be securely attached with exterior-grade staples such that it cannot sag, curl, or buckle. Sharp edges and/or protruding staples cannot be permitted.

5. Bat houses must have durable, tight-fit construction (no unplanned gaps). All exterior seams must be caulked or glued (latex calk much preferred) during assembly to prevent drafts or warping. All

screws, staples, nails, and metal components must be exterior-grade and must not protrude into roost chambers.

6. All exterior parts of wooden houses must be at least 1/2" thick. If plywood is used, it must be graded ACX or BCX for outdoor use. When cedar, pine, or other lumbar is used to construct fronts or backs, it must be shiplap or tongue and grooved joints. Roofs or sides are best cut from cedar or pine lumber.

7. Outer shell must consist of either UV-resistant plastic OR wood treated with either water-based sealant or three coats of paint (preferably both). Pressure treated wood is acceptable only when thoroughly coated with a quality sealant, such as Kilz (all-purpose interior/exterior primer), followed by three coats of water-based paint. Additionally, sealing and painting of all interior surfaces may extend lifespan and is much preferred but must not lessen footing by filling in scored or cut grooves.

8. Half-inch ventilation slots are required for most houses. Positioning and size are dependent on house design. Unvented houses are acceptable only if specifically intended and advertised for cool climates.

9. For bat house kits, adequate instructions must be provided for customers to caulk, paint, and assemble the house according to the guidelines listed above. Instructions also must contain adequate guidance for mounting and placement.

10. Advertising and any instructions or literature must be approved by MTBC. Unsubstantiated or misleading claims are not permitted.

Acquiring MTBC's Seal of Approval

1. To be considered for MTBC's Bat House Seal of Approval, please submit adequate photos and description of construction methods to bathouses@merlintuttle.org.

2. If standards appear to be met, you will be promptly notified and invited to submit your house(s) and any associated instructions or advertising material for certification approval. Please ship to:

   Merlin Tuttle's Bat Conservation
   5000 Mission Oaks Blvd., # 41
   Austin, TX 78735
   U.S.A.

3. Once a sample product is received, MTBC will inspect the construction and accept, reject, or advise on modifications needed for product approval. Each new design requires independent certification. Only if all houses manufactured are certified can the certification be applied broadly.

4. Any literature intended to accompany the seal will also be reviewed, accepted, rejected, or returned with suggested edits.

5. For mock-up purposes only, MTBC may lend a temporary certification "placeholder."

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6. Notice of acceptance, rejection, or modification will be sent via email as soon as possible. Please notify MTBC of any deadlines.

7. Once all terms have been met, our seal will be released to the applicant and a link to the applicant's website will be added to our resource, titled "Selecting a Quality Bat House."

8. By displaying MTBC's Bat House Seal of Approval, manufacturers assume responsibility for maintaining product quality. Unauthorized changes, unless promptly remedied, may result in certification withdrawal with 60 days of written notice.

9. Approved bat house samples will be donated at fundraising events or used in MTBC field tests. They cannot be returned.

10. Follow-up with approved manufacturers will be conducted bi-annually.