



## Lewis and Clark National Forest

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# News Release

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## Public invited to help set a world record building bat houses

Great Falls Montana – Oct. 27: This coming Saturday there will be a unique opportunity to combine a great hands-on conservation activity with a twist of Halloween spirit. On Saturday, October 31 at the Lewis & Clark Interpretive Center, from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. employees and volunteers from the Lewis & Clark National Forest will be working with community members of all ages to build bat houses to aid in bat conservation and provide bats with healthy safe homes.

This event is geared to kids, families, and interested adults and is part of a larger effort. “Our local event is part of a national event that is going on this Halloween in an attempt to set a world record for the most bat houses ever built in a day by building 5,000 bat houses across the United States and Canada this coming Saturday,” said forest spokesperson Dave Cunningham. “Here in Great Falls this free event will be a fun one for kids and families to join in as we to try to build 21 bat houses. These bat houses will then be installed at a variety of locations on National Forest Lands. The bat house kits will be assembled and painted at the center so kids should wear appropriate clothing.” Participants will work in small groups to build the bat houses and anyone interested is invited to drop in to help out for as long as their schedule allows. In addition to the bat house construction educational programs about bats will also be presented.

Contrary to bats’ creepy reputation, bats are actually an incredibly diverse and ecologically important group of species.

According to the <http://batslive.pwnet.org/> website, there are more than 1,200 species of bats – about one-fifth of all mammal species. They range from the world's smallest mammal, the bumblebee bat that weighs less than a penny to the giant flying foxes, a fruit eating bat of the tropics that can approach a six-foot wingspan.

Bats are primarily predators of night-flying insects, including many of the most damaging agricultural pests and others that bedevil human populations. Diverse bat populations help control agricultural pests reducing the need for chemical pesticides. More than two-thirds of bat species hunt insects, and they have healthy appetites. A single little brown bat, a species found across Montana, can eat up to 1,000 mosquito-sized insects in a single hour, while a pregnant or lactating female bat typically eats the equivalent of her entire body weight in insects each night.

All but four of the 47 bat species found in the United States and Canada feed solely on insects, including many destructive agricultural pests. The remaining species feed on nectar, pollen and the fruit of cacti and agaves and play an important role in pollination and seed dispersal in southwestern deserts.

For additional information on the bat house building event, contact the Lewis and Clark Interpretive Center at 727-8733.