

## Town of Erin Species at Risk – Bats



Several species of North American bats are in grave danger because of an invasive disease called white-nose syndrome, first discovered in North America in 2006. Populations of three Ontario species (Little Brown Myotis, Northern Myotis, and Tri-colored Bat) have declined by as much as 99% in recent years due to the disease.

**Description:** Everybody knows what bats look like – sort of like eerie flying mice. They are most visible at dusk when they fly zig-zag patterns hunting for mosquitos and other bugs.

**Habitat:** Around Erin bats can be seen in both settled and rural areas. They forage in residential areas, along waterways, forest edges and over fields. Females establish summer maternity colonies, often in buildings or large trees. All three of our local species overwinter in cold, humid hibernacula (caves/mines), which may be hundreds of kilometres from their summering areas.

**Threats:** Bats can be affected by disruption of their breeding colonies, chemical contamination, and wind turbines. Although these dangers can be important, the greatest threat by far to the fate of bats in Erin, Ontario, and much of North America, is white-nose syndrome.

This disease, which is actually a kind of fungus, spreads among hibernating bats. It irritates the bats and they wake up, and eventually they starve because there are no insects for them to eat in the winter.

Although bats have an undeservedly negative reputation, they play a vital role in maintaining healthy ecosystems by eating insects that are agricultural pests, and potential vectors for

human disease.

Scientists are working on white-nosed syndrome, and although some progress is being made, it seems likely that the best hope will be genetic adaptation by the animals themselves. If bats can adapt, it will be many decades before populations can recover because of their slow reproductive rates.

**Status:** These three species of bats were classified as endangered in Canada in an emergency listing by the Government of Canada in 2013.

**What can you do?** Standing up for bats can be tricky as they are not widely beloved or understood. Help educate people about white-nose syndrome and spread the word about bats and the plight they are facing. If you see a bat in the winter contact the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry. Please do not enter bat hibernacula, and do consider putting up a bat house to provide summer roosting and nesting homes. Learn more about white-nose syndrome at [www.whitenosesyndrome.org](http://www.whitenosesyndrome.org)

## SARs in the Town of Erin

### Birds

Barn Swallow  
Chimney Swift  
Common Nighthawk

### Mammals

Little Brown Bat  
Small-footed Bat  
Northern Long-eared Bat

### Reptiles and Amphibians

Jefferson Salamander  
Milk Snake



### Flora

Butternut  
American Chestnut  
Ginseng

### Insects

Rusty-patched Bumblebee

## What is ESAC?

ESAC is the Environment and Sustainability Advisory Committee of Council for the Town of Erin. Our mission is to provide sound environmental advice to our Council, develop partnerships with neighbours, businesses and the community, communicate important environmental issues, and help make Erin a sustainable, climate-change-ready, and environmentally progressive community.



**For more about ESAC or to join ESAC contact:**

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## Bats

### Species at Risk



Did you know that here in the Town of Erin there are many species at risk (SAR)? They are not the “stars” of the natural world, but are populations of grassland, woodland and wetland creatures that were once plentiful but are now threatened by habitat loss and other factors. How can we help? First, get to know what these threatened species are, then learn what actions might help them flourish again.

