

Bats? Yes, bats!

Most people we talk to in and around Hamilton don't even realise that we have native bats in New Zealand, let alone in the heart of the city. New Zealand has three species of bat, the long-tailed bat, the lesser short-tailed bat, and greater short-tailed bat. However the greater short-tailed bat is sadly thought to be extinct.



Hamilton is lucky to be one of only a few cities in New Zealand with a resident population of long-tailed bats. The long-tailed bat is unique to New Zealand and, together with the short-tailed bat, is New Zealand's only remaining native land mammal. The long-tailed bat is currently classed as 'nationally critical'. Long-tailed bats can be found throughout New Zealand in varying habitats. However, their numbers are declining due to removal of habitat and predation by pests such as possums and rats.

What do they look like?



Source: Gerard Kelly, Project Echo

Long-tailed bats have a dark brown to black furry torso. Their wings and limbs are virtually hairless. They only weigh 8 to 14g and are approximately the size of a mouse! They are nocturnal; they roost during the day and use echolocation to prey on insects at night. They are social animals and can often feed and roost in numbers of 10-50 – sometimes they can be seen 'swarming' around the entrance to a roost. It is easy to confuse them with small birds such as fantails or swallows, especially around dusk when birds are beginning to roost and bats starting feed. The greatest amount of recorded bat activity in Hamilton is around the Southern gully systems, and reserves along the river.

Where do they live?

In the past, bats would roost in large mature forest trees, such as Kahikatea, Rimu, Totara and many others. Bats can roost in a number of places in a tree – a cavity (hollow) is perfect, but bats also roost under loose bark, or in split/splintered wood. With the clearing of native forest bats have lost their natural habitat. Bats have had to find other roosts, mainly in aging exotic trees, as small young trees are typically without any of the features which make a good bat roost.



How can we help?

Hazard or habitat - old and dead trees provide a perfect habitat for bats. These are often the trees which people want to remove first. Stop and think whether it is really necessary to remove a tree. Even a tree which appears to be dangerous can be made safe and turned into an even more valuable habitat (**talk to Treelands!**).

Plant trees for the future – even though small young trees don't provide the habitat bats need, they will do one day! Instead of planting shrubs and small trees, think big!

Install artificial roosts – man made roosts have been a great success story for long-tailed bats in Hamilton. If you have a suitable location and tree, we can help supply and install a bat box to help create a great place for bats to roost. It is important that the boxes are constructed and located properly, **Treelands can help with this!**

Predator control - pests such as possums, rats and cats predate on bats and also like to use typical bat roosting sites for their homes. Control pests at your place to help protect bat.



www.treelands.co.nz

info@treelands.co.nz

0800 TREELANDS (873 352)

