

How Much Is a Bat Worth?

Protecting bats protects farms, rural communities, and public budgets

How?

When bats disappear, farms become less productive, pesticide use can rise, and rural counties can lose revenue. Saving bats is good ecology and good economics.



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The Conversation
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↑ **600,000**

cucumber beetles **eaten** per year by
a 150-bat colony

↑ **33 million**

rootworms potentially **prevented**

↓ **\$420M/yr**

estimated White Nose Syndrome₁-related
agricultural **losses** as of 2017

↓ **\$150/person**

annual rural county revenue **loss** after
White Nose Syndrome₁ arrives

What the article explains

- Bats pollinate plants, produce guano fertilizer, and eat insects that damage crops and bother people.
- White-nose syndrome has spread widely and caused severe losses in infected colonies.
- Fewer bats can mean more crop pests, lower yields, higher pesticide costs, and more chemical exposure.
- Economic effects extend beyond farms to county tax revenue and municipal borrowing costs.

Why this matters locally

- Rural and agricultural counties depend on healthy land productivity and stable local revenues.
- Bat conservation can protect natural pest-control services that support farms and food systems.
- Public outreach can connect biodiversity to pocketbook issues: food, roads, schools, health infrastructure, and community resilience.
- A local bat message can be both ethical and practical: bats matter for ecosystems and for people.

How to help bats

- Protect mature trees, stream corridors, wetlands, forest edges, and native insect-hosting plants.
- Use integrated pest management and reduce broad-spectrum pesticides where possible.
- Respect cave closures and decontamination guidance; never disturb roosting or hibernating bats.
- Support bat research, monitoring, safe roosts, and public education.

Source and attribution: "How much is a bat worth? Protecting these tiny insect-eaters isn't just good for farms – their deaths cost taxpayers and the wider economy." *The Conversation*, published May 14, 2026. Authors: Dale Manning, University of Tennessee; Anya Nakhmurina, Yale University; Eli Fenichel, Yale University. Article republished by SeattlePI/Hearst from *The Conversation* under a Creative Commons license. Original URL: <https://theconversation.com/how-much-is-a-bat-worth-protecting-these-tiny-insect-eaters-isnt-just-good-for-farms-their-deaths-cost-taxpayers-and-the-wider-economy-282014>

1. **White Nose Syndrome or WNS:** White-nose syndrome (WNS) is a disease that affects hibernating bats and is caused by a fungus, *Pseudogymnoascus destructans*, or Pd for short. WNS or Pd has killed more than 90% of some bats species since its discovery in the United States in 2006. Source: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service at <https://www.whitenosesyndrome.org>

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