

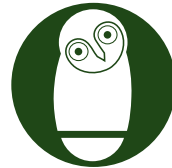


HUMAN-RAT CONFLICTS

- Rats are not native to BC and tend to thrive only in urban areas or areas where food is abundant and winters are mild.
- Rats can cause significant damage to gardens, buildings, crops, and livestock in their search for food and denning sites. Rats cause damage both from feeding on crops but also from gnawing through structures, including electrical wires.
- Rat populations are spreading throughout the southern interior of BC. Getting ahead of the spread is key to being able to minimize the problems associated with large rat populations.
- Controlling food sources and limiting denning areas are key to keeping rats in check - trapping is, at best, a stop-gap measure.
- Children should be taught not to approach any wildlife; serious bites and scratches may result from an encounter with a rat.



British Columbia Conservation Foundation



The BC Conservation Foundation is a not-for-profit, registered charity that has been working in BC since 1969. To learn more about our organization please visit us at www.bccf.com

WildSafeBC is funded through partnerships throughout BC.

Core funding is made possible through the

BC Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy.

To report wildlife in conflict contact the Conservation Officer Service:

1.877.952.7277



Ministry of
Environment and
Climate Change Strategy

www.wildsafebc.com

Version 1.0 2018



RATS



British Columbia Conservation Foundation





MANAGE YOUR ATTRACTANTS

Rats are attracted to a wide variety of foods, and although they are good climbers and can get into relatively small spaces they can still be dissuaded from visiting your property.

1. **Keep all garbage securely** stored until the day of collection. Garbage should be stored in a secure container which should be cleaned on a regular basis.
2. **Feed pets indoors**, or if fed outdoors, bring in any feed that is not immediately eaten by your pets. Rats will quickly target any type of pet food left out.
3. **Take birdfeeders down at night and feed only during winter months.** Birdfeeders attract a wide variety of wildlife and rats can climb along wires, ropes or steel posts. Be sure to clean up ALL spilled seed under the bird feeder. As rats are nocturnal, taking the feeder in at night will minimize the potential for rats accessing the feed.
4. **Manage your compost properly and turn regularly.** Ideally you will use a rat-proof composter, but lacking that, turn your compost on a regular basis - right to the bottom to ensure that rats cannot nest underneath the compost. Line the bottom of your compost with wire mesh to exclude rats.
5. **Engage with your neighbours.** If you have rats on your property there is a good chance your neighbour does as well. Rat issues need to be addressed on a block-wide basis.

! RAT SAFETY

Rats should never be handled directly as they have very sharp teeth and a bite or scratch from a rat needs to be checked out immediately by a professional.

Rats can carry a wide variety of diseases that can be transmitted to humans either through direct contact (bites or scratches) or via indirect means such as contamination by urine or feces.

When disposing of a dead rat or cleaning up after a rat infestation, be sure to wear appropriate protective equipment, such as rubber gloves and a mask - consult the BC Centre for Disease Control for proper protocols.

Rats are **not** a species that the Conservation Officer Service deals with. Contact a local, reputable pest control agent if you need assistance with removing rats.



Rats, once limited to coastal BC communities are now found inland as far east as the Kootenays and as far north as Kamloops. Rats may be living in more northerly locations but have yet to be reported.

Rats are, with good reason, considered a species of great concern for many home owners in BC. Rat populations, once established, can increase exponentially in a very short period of time. Concern around the rat's **historical role in spreading disease** and its voracious appetite for many of our crops, make it an animal we need to defend against.

Rats were introduced to BC in the mid 1800's and were originally centered around port cities. In the past number of years, **rat populations in urban areas** in the southern half of the province have been on the increase.

Because of the rats' negative influence on native wildlife (most notably ground-nesting birds), eradication programs have taken place on islands where rats have established themselves. It is in a home owner's best interest to keep a rat population from establishing itself in the first place; prevention is easier than eradication.

Rats will have a nest or den from which they will leave to go on **nightly foraging expeditions**. Normally, rats will forage within 100m of their den but can travel longer distances if food is scarce.

Rats are very adaptable when it comes to choosing a food supply and learn from their neighbours' specific foraging techniques. Some **rats can even fish** and dive for food like mussels and fingerlings.



WHERE'S THE RAT?

While we don't track rats on our Wildlife Alert Reporting Program (WARP), you can use the program to learn about other unwanted visitors to your yard. By knowing where wildlife is and what is bringing it in, we can all do our part to keep wildlife wild and our communities safe.

www.wildsafebc.com



RAT FACTS:

- Rats (members of the genus *Rattus*) were introduced to BC via boat traffic in the mid-1800s.
- There are two types of rats in BC: The Norway rat (*Rattus norvegicus*) and the roof rat (*Rattus rattus*).
- Rats can grow up to 50cm in length with about half of that being a tail that is devoid of hair.
- The Norway rat has a larger body than the roof rat, but conversely the roof rat's tail is longer than the Norway rat's tail (relative to the body size).
- Owls, hawks, foxes, coyotes, and weasels prey upon rats; snakes eat immature rats.
- Rats are killed by vehicles, traps, poisons, or other rats. Some domestic cats and dogs capture rats, usually small ones.
- Rats are usually associated with urban environments but also survive along the coast where winters are not as severe.
- Rats are prodigious breeders and a pair of rats could theoretically produce over 900 offspring within a single year.
- Rats are short lived and usually only survive a little over a year outside of captivity.
- Rats are omnivores (meaning they eat both meat and plant materials), but focus primarily on vegetation, including grains, fruits and vegetables.



www.wildsafebc.com