Project: Increasing Bat Population through Bat Houses and Native Gardens

By: Mendel Cohen and Zoe Smolinski

Mentored by Hans Plugge

Vision:

- Our vision is to support, sustain, and increase the local bat population by providing suitable habitats through the establishment of a native garden and installment of bat houses at the Oakland Mills Interfaith Center.
- By promoting a healthy bat community, we aim to help the balance of the ecosystem and promote natural pest control, increasing our community's biodiversity and environmental well-being.

Objective:

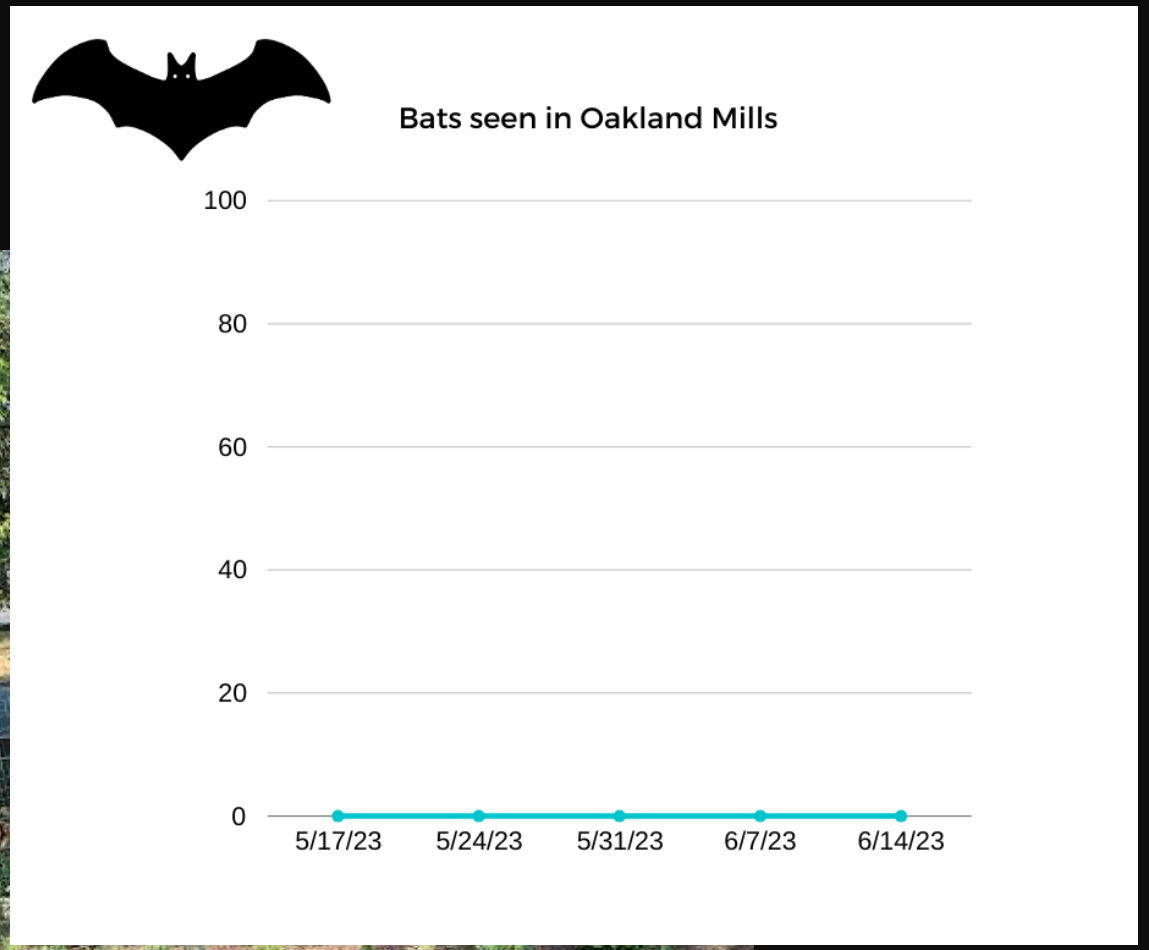
- Establishment of a native garden will increase biodiversity and ecological balance and will support wildlife. The plants will also attract a variety of super cool pollinators like bees and butterflies.
- The addition of bat houses will contribute to the conservation efforts of many threatened or endangered species of bats in Maryland, including the endangered Little Brown Bat.

Step One: Consulting the Experts

- First, we connected with our mentor, Hans Plugge from the Oakland Mills Interfaith Center's Green Team. Together, we developed an action plan to improve the habitat for the bats.
- We also connected with Edwin Gould, who has expertise on bats as a retired professor and zoo curator. He helped us to determine best practices when trying to attract bats to the area.
- Both have been incredible resources throughout our project, and we are incredibly grateful for their time and expertise!

Step Two: Surveying the Area

- For 5 weeks, we met at the Interfaith Center every Wednesday to conduct a baseline survey of the bat population.
- We then evaluated the area, discussing suitable locations to place bat houses and plants for the native garden.
- There was a very low number of bats near the Interfaith Center, as shown by our data table.
- (We didn't see a single bat!)

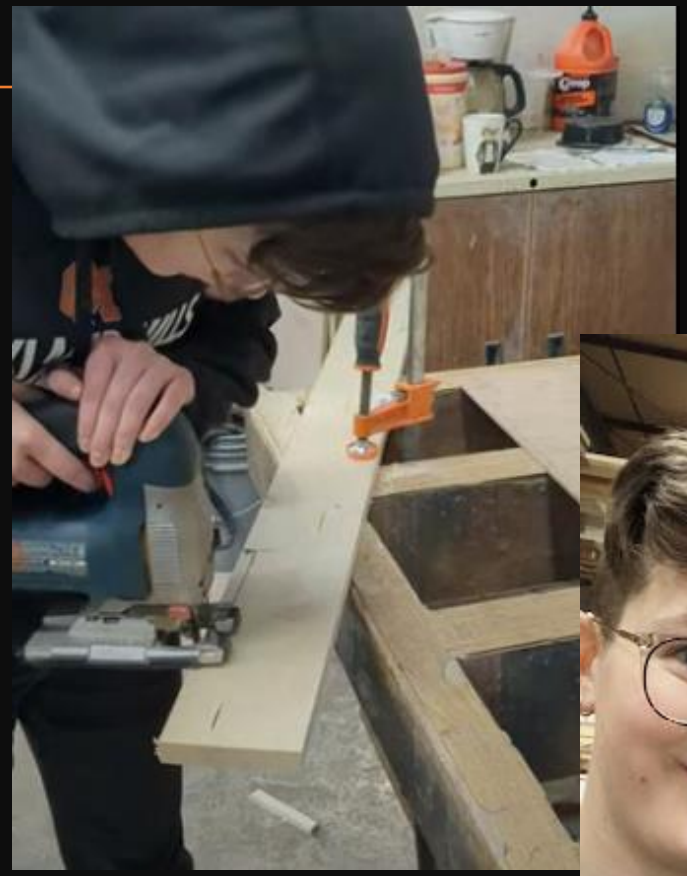


Step Three: Establishing a Native Garden

After selecting native plant species that attract bats and their food sources, we began preparing and planting.

Step Four: Building Bat Houses

We got into the wood shop to measure and cut the wood, then packed the pieces up for assembly.



Step Five: Assembling Bat Houses

We got our friends to volunteer to help us assemble the bat houses.

We built 12 bat houses in total!

Results

We opted for a design that is multi chambered so the bats can move around based on the temperature. There are holes drilled in the panels they can go through. There are grooves cut into the bottom that they can grab onto for support when climbing inside.

Installation

9 of our bat houses were distributed among the community, and the other 3 were put up by a cherry picker in a tree at the Oakland Mills Interfaith Center!

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Oakland Mills Interfaith Green Team

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