

British bats in brief

What are bats?

Bats are extraordinary mammals that have complex social lives and can live up to 30 years. There are 17 species in the UK. Many bat species are declining due to loss of roosts and foraging areas.

How do they hunt?

The saying 'blind as a bat' is misleading as most bats can see well, but they use a highly sophisticated system called echolocation to help find prey in the dark. They send out high-pitched sounds that bounce off objects revealing the location of insects and obstacles.

Where do they live?

Roof spaces, tree hollows and even modern houses are their summer homes. In winter, bats move to cooler places with stable temperatures like caves and old mines. Several hundred individuals can congregate in a winter roost. Bats are superb mothers and often nurse young with other females. Watch them via 'batcams' in selected NT houses. The National Trust is pleased to have bats associated with all its properties.



Bat walks

In summer, take an evening stroll with our wildlife experts, see bats hunting over water and pick up their calls using bat detectors. Go to www.nationaltrust.org.uk/events

There are also 100 local bat groups that organise events around the UK.

All British bats and their roosts are protected by law. It is illegal to harm or disturb bats, or deliberately alter their roost sites without seeking advice – call the Bat Conservation Trust's Bat Helpline on **0845 1300 228**.

www.bats.org.uk

www.nationaltrust.org.uk/hiddennature

For alternative formats
call **01793 817 744** or
email **nature.technician**
@nationaltrust.org.uk

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DISCOVER BATS

Bat Conservation Trust 



Lesser horseshoe
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Daubenton's

If you see a bat flying low and steady over a pond or river, chances are it is a Daubenton's or 'water' bat (below). They tend to live in open woodlands not far from water. Their chest fur is silvery and sometimes you can see its pale reflection. Watch closely and you may witness a Daubenton's bat grabbing insects from the surface with its feet.



Daubenton's

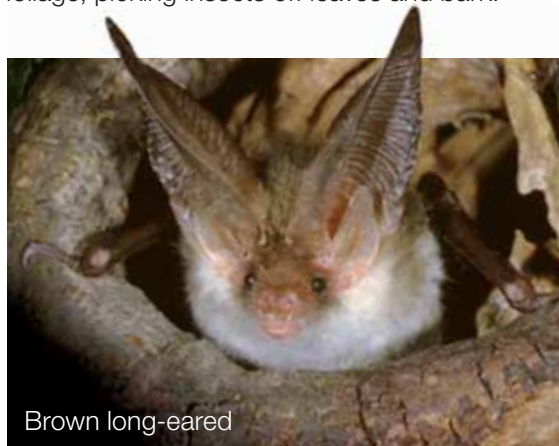
JJ Kaczanow/BCT

Horseshoes

Like popular portrayals of bats, horseshoes (left) wrap their wings around their body when resting. They have a peculiar disk-like facial structure which is related to their echolocation system. When hunting, they will watch prey from a regular perch and fly out to catch insects such as moths. Both the greater and lesser horseshoes declined sharply during the 20th century and are confined to southwest England and Wales (lesser also in west Ireland) though numbers appear to have increased in recent years. The greater horseshoe is the size of a pear and one of the largest bats in Europe.

Long-eareds

Also known as 'whispering bats' because their echolocation sounds are very quiet. The brown long-eared (below) is found throughout the UK but the grey long-eared is very rare and only inhabits southern England, though the species may well move north as our climate warms. Both have very long ears that they tuck under their wings when resting. Brown long-eared bats in particular will often fly slowly amongst foliage, picking insects off leaves and bark.



Brown long-eared

Hugh Clark/BCT

Pipistrelle



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Pipistrelles

Fluttering like large butterflies, pipistrelles (above) are the most commonly encountered British bat and often roost in modern buildings. They are tiny – the size of a thumb – and easy to see as the light falls. All three species (common, soprano and Nathusius') fly erratically, pursuing bugs such as midges and mayflies on the wing. In a night, each bat will consume up to 3,000 insects!

Natterer's

Found throughout the Britain and Ireland, Natterer's bats are cosmopolitan creatures but little is known about them. They are sometimes seen over water (pictured here drinking) but mostly in woodlands where they fly with great control about trees, picking off insects and catching others in flight.



Natterer's

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