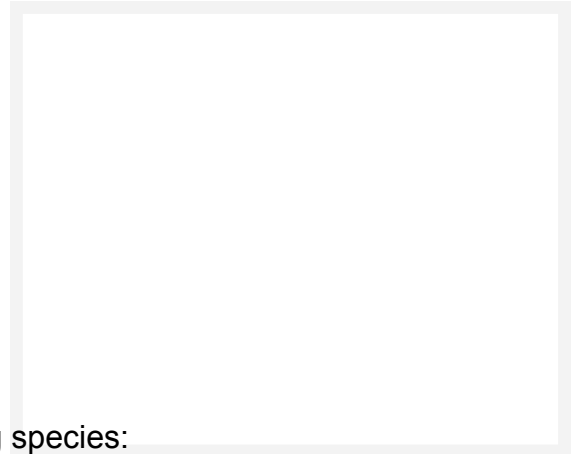


Bats

Local Biodiversity Action Plan

Associated Habitat Action Plans:

Ancient Semi-Natural Broadleaved Woodland,
Unimproved Grassland, Ancient Hedgerows



Ecology

The bats action plan is a grouped plan covering the following species:

Common Pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus*) & **Soprano Pipistrelle** (*Pipistrellus pygmaeus*)

Pipistrelle bats are the commonest in Britain but are declining. Recently pipistrelles were separated into two species. Common pipistrelle echolocates at about 45kHz whereas calls from Soprano pipistrelle calls peak at about 55kHz. This is the most reliable way of telling these two species apart and this can be done with an electronic bat detector and a trained ear! Both species have dark brown fur and behave very similarly.

Noctule (*Nyctalus noctula*)

Noctules are usually the first bats to appear in the evening often from roosts in large trees. They have golden brown fur and long narrow wings designed for fast flight. Sometimes confused with swifts, noctules can fly at up to 50kmph performing aerial acrobatics to catch insect prey. They feed generally on moths, beetles, mayflies, midges and winged ants in woodland and pasture. Noctules echolocate at 25kHz and choose to hibernate in cool, humid sites.

Brown Long Eared (*Plecotus auritus*)

Brown long-eared bats have light brown fur and are easily identifiable by their large ears which are almost as long as their body. Emerging 1 hour after sunset, brown long-eared bats hunt along linear features such as hedges, walls and river valleys collecting moths, beetles, flies, caddis flies, beetles and earwigs in pouches. Food is then carried back to the roost and eaten. Piles of discarded insect



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remains are an indication of the species's presence.

Whiskered (*Myotis Mystacinus*) & **Brandts** (*Myotis brandtii*)

Whiskered and Brandts bats are very similar and were only separated into two species in the 1970. They are small with dark grey fur with echolocation calls ranging from 35-80kHz. They roost in houses, barns and churches and hibernate in caves, mines and tunnels. Both species emerge half an hour after sunset to hunt for moths, small insects, spiders, midges, mayflies and beetles in meadows and woodlands.

Daubentons (*Myotis daubentonii*)

Daubenton's have red-brown fur with pale underparts and large hairy feet. They are especially adapted to life near water, which they skim over at high speeds scooping up prey in their tail membrane. In particular they feed on midges, caddis flies, pond skaters and mayflies. They hunt across lakes, slow-moving rivers, ponds, woodland and canals roosting in bridges, tree holes, tunnels and caves.

Leislers (*Nyctalus leisleri*)

Leislers are similar to but smaller than Noctules with thick golden-brown fur. They are noisy bats, which can be heard squeaking just before emergence at sunset. Echolocation peaks at 25kHz as they hunt for flies, moths, caddis flies and beetles amongst pasture, woodland and parkland. They are highly mobile and may move large distances between roosts utilising natural cavities in trees, caves and tunnels.

Natterers (*Myotis nattereri*)

Natterers are similar in appearance to Daubenton's bats with sandy-grey fur and white undersides. Their broad wings and tail membrane increase agility enabling them to catch midges, small flies, mosquitoes, lacewings and small moths directly from leaves and branches.

Serotine (*Eptesicus serotinus*)

Serotine's are large bats with dark brown fur. They rely on buildings for roosting making them particularly vulnerable to disturbance. They hunt within pasture, parkland, woodland edges and along hedgerows to catch flies, moths, chafers and dung beetles.

Current status

There are 16 species of bat occurring in Britain with at least 2 others occurring as vagrants. Ten bat species have been recently recorded in the Cheshire region:

Brown Long-eared, Whiskered, Brandts, Noctule, Daubentons, Leislers, Natterers and Serotine (although serotine records have yet to be confirmed).



All species of bat are given full protection under Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act, 1981 and Schedule 2 of the Conservation (Natural Habitats & c.) Regulations 1994. This protection extends to their roosts and hibernacula.

All of the ten bat species occurring in the Cheshire region are listed in the U.K. Biodiversity Steering Group Report Volume 2 (Action Plans). Both common and soprano pipistrelles have been UK Priority Species since 1994 due to their unfavourable conservation status in Europe. The common Pipistrelle is considered widespread in the UK and was removed from the UK Priority List during the 2007 review. The soprano pipistrelle remains a UK priority and as a result of the review has been joined by noctule and brown-long eared bats. New UK targets for soprano pipistrelle have been produced however details of the new action plans for the noctule and the brown-long eared bats are awaited. The remaining seven species are UK Species of Conservation Concern. There are no national action plans for these species as yet.

The Bat Conservation Trust (BCT) has produced a national action plan for the conservation of all bat species in Britain. This lists the status of all the species occurring in the U.K., along with recommendations for future research, monitoring and protection. Many aspects of this report are reflected in this action plan for bats in the Cheshire region and co-operation with the BCT and other relevant groups is sought.

The general consensus is that all species of bat are declining nationally. Following discussions with local bat group members, it was decided that not enough is known about any one species of bat occurring in the region to prioritise the conservation effort.

It was then decided that at this stage one single action plan would be produced to cover all of the species in the Cheshire region. This will be reassessed once sufficient information has been obtained.

The National Target to restore pre 1970s populations is an impossible target as we do not have sufficient data in Cheshire to establish what our pre 1970 population levels were. It is known that pipistrelles are doing well and there is an increase in numbers across their national range. As there is now a problem of Lyssa Virus (otherwise known as bat rabies) in the UK, it is strongly recommended that the general public do not handle bats, especially with bare hands.

Threats

* The intensification of agriculture, inappropriate riparian management and changes in land use leading to a decline of insect prey and loss of connective flyways which act as feeding and



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commuting routes.

- * Misunderstanding of the legislation protecting bats, leading to loss or damage of roosts when consultation procedures have been ignored.
- * Loss of and/or disturbance to winter roosting sites.
- * Loss and disturbance of other roosts, particularly maternity roosts, through use of toxic timber treatment chemicals, intolerance by roost owners, inappropriate building practices, and tree felling.
- * Developments and road construction resulting in loss of suitable roosting and foraging habitat and inappropriate mitigation.
- * Wind farms, domestic and industrial, of which the impact on bats has not been fully investigated in the UK.

How are we helping to conserve bats in the Cheshire region?

- * Current recording within the region is carried out via two volunteer bat groups, the Cheshire Bat Group and the Merseyside and West Lancashire Bat Group which incorporates Wirral, Trafford and Tameside.
- * Regular surveying and monitoring is carried out by the local bat groups through the National Bat Monitoring Programme.
- * The consultation system of English Nature and the local bat groups works to protect threatened roosts and individual bats.
- * The trainee bat handlers have continued with their training in order to gain the experience required to obtain their licences.
- * The collation of records from bat workers, members of the public and other sources has begun.
- * Members of the BAP group have continued to raise public awareness and have undertaken educational activities to improve the understanding and acceptance of bats.

Objectives, targets and actions

The objectives, targets and actions to help conserve Bats in the Cheshire region can be found on the [Biodiversity Action Reporting System \(BARS\)](#) along with full details of our progress so far.

How to find out more about bats

Bat Conservation Trust - www.bats.org.uk

UK BAP for Pipistrelle Bats - www.ukbap.org.uk/UKPlans.aspx?ID=519



How can you get involved?

Join the Cheshire Bat Group or the Merseyside and West Lancashire Bat Group (which incorporates Wirral, Trafford and Tameside).

Contact details

National Lead Partners Bat Conservation Trust
National Lead Contact Pipistrelle Bat - Dr Katie Parsons,
Bat Conservation Trust, Phone: 020 7501 3625

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