

# BATS *All species*

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Bats and their roosting sites are protected by UK and European legislation. The greatest threat to bats comes from loss of roosts due to demolition, alteration and repair of buildings or structures, felling of trees, and through direct disturbance of breeding and hibernation roosts.

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## Legal and Conservation Status

- Annex IV Habitats Directive (European Protected Species)
- UK Protected Species
- UK Biodiversity Action Plan Priority Species and Species of Principal Importance in England (Soprano Pipistrelle, Brown Long-eared and Noctule)
- Cumbria Biodiversity Action Plan species

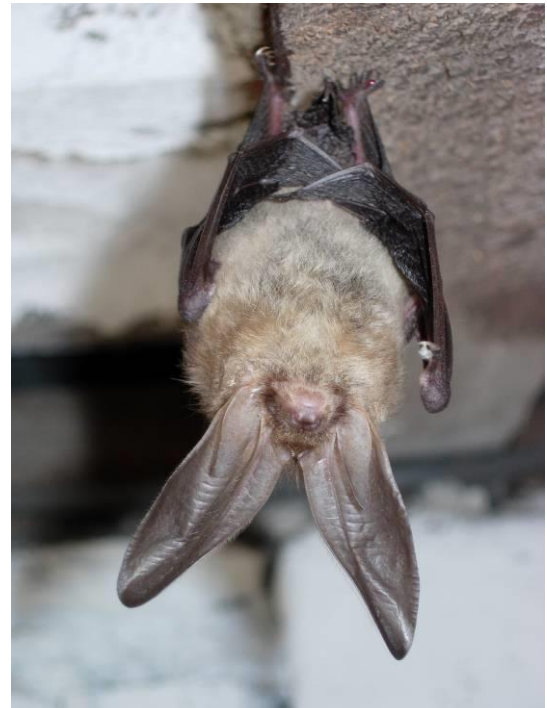
### ***All bats are protected under:***

- Section 39 of the Conservation (Natural Habitats &c) Regulations 1994 (as amended) (Schedule 2) as European Protected Species
- Section 9 of Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) (Schedule 5)

### ***It is an offence to:***

- Deliberately capture, injure or kill a bat;
- Intentionally or recklessly disturb a bat in its roost or deliberately disturb bats in such a way as to be likely significantly to affect (i) the ability of any significant group of bats to survive, breed, rear or nurture their young, or (ii) the local distribution or abundance.
- Damage or destroy the breeding or resting place (roost) of a bat;
- Intentionally or recklessly obstruct access to a bat roost;
- Possess a bat (alive or dead), or any part of a bat.

(This is a brief summary of the main points of the law, not a complete statement.)



*Brown Long-eared Bat © John Hooson/National Trust*

## Habitat

Bats require insect-rich habitats in which to feed. These can include woodlands, pasture, wetlands, gardens and parkland.

Bats roost in a variety of situations, including bridges, tunnels, caves, mines, trees, bat boxes and a wide range of buildings (e.g. barns, churches, industrial and commercial buildings and houses of different ages). They will use many roosts throughout the year, moving frequently between roosts, even in the winter.

Bats use linear features such as hedgerows, rivers, woodland edges and roadside verges as flight-lines along which they both feed and travel between roosting and feeding areas.

### ***Cumbria Key Habitats that are particularly important for bats include:***

Semi-natural woodland	Fen, marsh and swamp
Hay meadows & lowland pastures	Rivers
Lakes, ponds and tarns	Hedgerows

## Ecology

Bats hibernate in the winter, when they go into a state of torpor by reducing heart rate, breathing rate and body temperature. At this time bats are particularly vulnerable to disturbance which causes them to wake and use up fat reserves.

In late spring female bats congregate to form nursery colonies where each generally produces a single baby, usually in June. At this time colonies are particularly vulnerable to disturbance which can cause the abandonment of the flightless young. The babies are weaned at around five weeks, after which they are able to fly out at dusk with the adults and feed using ultrasonic echolocation to locate insect prey. Generally the nursery roost disperses around August, although it is common for some individuals to continue to use the roost into the autumn. Sexual maturity is usually reached in the second year.

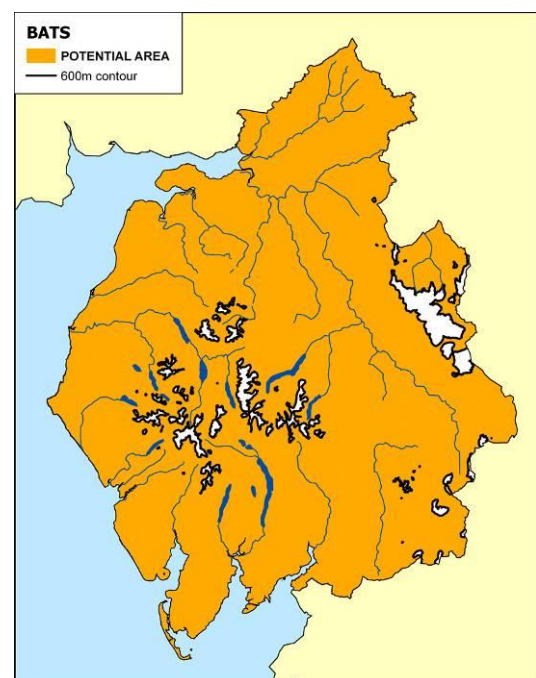
## Distribution

The following species are known to breed in Cumbria.

- [Noctule](#) - *Nyctalus noctula*
- [Daubenton's Bat](#) – *Myotis daubentonii*
- [Natterer's Bat](#) – *Myotis nattereri*
- [Whiskered Bat](#) – *Myotis mystacinus*
- [Brandt's Bat](#) – *Myotis brandtii*
- [Brown long-eared Bat](#) – *Plecotus auritus*
- [Common Pipistrelle](#) – *Pipistrellus pipistrellus*
- [Soprano Pipistrelle](#) – *Pipistrellus pygmaeus*

The following species have been recorded but not breeding in Cumbria:

- Nathusius' pipistrelle-*Pipistrellus nathusii*
- Leisler's bat- *Nyctalus leisleri*



## Conservation Issues

The most direct impacts are direct disturbance, loss of, or obstruction of access to roosts, and killing and injuring, due to demolition/alteration of buildings or structures, any ground works affecting caves or rock habitats, and the felling and de-limbing of trees.

Development and changes in land use and management can result in the loss of insect-rich feeding habitats and flight line features such as tree-lines, ditches and hedgerows. Similarly micro and midi wind turbines can kill and injure bats, disrupt flight lines/ feeding areas, and affect access to roosts.

Re-roofing, any other building alterations and timber treatment for insect pests/rot in lofts are major causes of loss of roost sites and direct disturbance.

Some species, e.g. Brown Long-eared and *Myotis* bats, are disturbed by light and lights shining on roost entrances and across regular flight lines can have a detrimental effect.

## Planning Considerations

- Bats are mobile creatures and almost any building, structure, cave, mine or tree has the potential to be used by bats.
- Bat roosts are protected whether bats are present or not.
- Any proposed development that may affect a bat roost or bat habitat requires a survey – see Bat Surveys - Good Practice Guidelines.
- Consideration must be given to the maintenance and provision of habitat corridors that are used for feeding or as flight routes.
- Surveys of buildings and structures for summer and autumn roost sites may take place at any time of the year as the signs of roosting bats such as droppings, urine staining, bodies and bones should remain throughout the year, though signs on the outside of buildings such as droppings and staining may be removed by the weather especially during the winter months. Hibernating bats may be found during winter surveys. Access would need to be gained to the entirety of the building or structure to ensure that all parts have been assessed. If this is not possible and there is bat potential (e.g. potential bat access points and roost sites) then further survey when bats are active would be necessary.
- If bat roosts are present, summer surveys will be required to determine species and population size, and their use of surrounding habitat in order to assess the potential impacts of development and appropriate protection and mitigation measures.
- Any development that would impact upon bats, their roosts and/or significant bat habitat would require adequate protection and mitigation measures, and the developer would require a European Protected Species Development Licence, under the Habitats Regulations 1994, to proceed.

## Enhancement Opportunities

- Incorporation of new roost features, such as bat bricks, within buildings or other structures. Projects such as the refurbishment of derelict or semi-derelict buildings, barn conversions, alterations to non-domestic premises, including churches, or other structures can all provide opportunities for roost features to be incorporated.
- Provision of wildlife-friendly shrubs, trees and grassland to improve feeding habitat.
- Creation of hedgerows, tree-lines and other linear features linking feeding and roosting habitats (corridors).

- Enhancement of the foraging habitat and movement corridors, and provision of bat boxes and other structures on trees and buildings, in areas where bats may occur.

## Further Information

[Bat Conservation Trust](#)

[Bats: surveys and mitigation for development projects. Natural England March 2015  
Natural England Wildlife Management & Licensing Service  
Trust'](#)

[Westmorland and Furness Bat Group](#)

[Cumberland Bat Group](#)

[Bats and Lighting, Alison Fure](#), The London Naturalist, No. 85, 2006

## Contacts

### National:

- **Bat Conservation Trust**, 5<sup>th</sup> Floor, Quadrant House, 250 Kennington Lane, London SE11 5RD Email: [enquiries@bats.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@bats.org.uk) 0345 1300 228

### Local:

- **Bat Helpline 0345 1300 228**
- **Natural England**, Juniper House, Murley Moss Business Park Oxenholme Rd, Kendal, Cumbria, LA9 7RL 0300 060 3900

## Current Action in Cumbria

- The Cumberland and the Westmorland and Furness Bat Groups monitor bat populations and seek to improve public understanding through events.
- Following the Cumbria Bats in Bridges Survey, Cumbria County Council has put a mechanism in place to protect actual and potential bridge roosts.

## Appendix 1

### Local status and habitat of Cumbrian breeding bat species

See also <http://www.cumberlandbatgroup.org.uk> .Follow link to “Bats in Cumbria”

Species	Local Status	Habitat
<b>Noctule</b> Nyctalus noctula	Widespread but uncommon; mobile populations; breeding roosts recorded.	Tree dweller; predominantly in lowlands. Occupies woodpecker and rot holes. Seldom in buildings. Will utilise bat boxes. Feeds over deciduous woodland, parkland, pasture, water and forest edges
<b>Daubenton's Bat</b> Myotis daubentonii	Widespread; hibernacula and breeding roosts recorded.	Roosts in bridges, tunnels, caves, mines, stone buildings and trees. Has been found hibernating underground at high altitude (550m). Feeds low over rivers, canals and other water bodies. Will forage in riverside woodland.
<b>Natterer's Bat</b> Myotis nattereri	Widespread; hibernacula and breeding roosts recorded. Less common than Daubenton's.	Similar to Daubenton's Bat and both species can be found together; roosts in bridges, old buildings, barns, trees and underground sites. Feeds in woodland and parkland. Has recently been recorded in some upland areas, mainly using riverside habitats
<b>Whiskered Bat</b> Myotis mystacinus	Widespread but uncommon; breeding roosts and hibernacula recorded.	Older, mainly stone buildings, churches, trees and often in bat boxes. Feeds mainly in deciduous woodland.
<b>Brandt's Bat</b> Myotis brandtii	Widespread but uncommon; hibernacula and breeding roosts recorded. “Swarming” sites recorded.	Similar to Whiskered Bat.
<b>Brown long-eared Bat</b> Plecotus auritus	Widespread and common; hibernacula and breeding roosts recorded.	Roosts in large open roof voids in old buildings, churches, barns (often with trees close by), underground sites and trees. Often found in bat boxes. Feeds in deciduous and coniferous woodland often within the canopy; around parkland trees, gardens, along hedgerows. Rarely flies across open spaces and often flies low to the ground.
<b>Common Pipistrelle</b> Pipistrellus	Widespread and common; breeding roosts recorded but species only recently	Wide age range of buildings; favours modern structures, trees occasionally and bat boxes. Feeds over diverse

pipistrellus (45kHz)	distinguished from Soprano Pipistrelle.	habitats; rural and urban gardens, woodland, farmland, or near water.  Often found hibernating behind wooden cladding on buildings, behind fascia boarding and in gaps in wooden window frames.
<b>Soprano Pipistrelle</b> Pipistrellus pygmaeus (55kHz)	Widespread and common; breeding roosts recorded but species only recently distinguished from Common Pipistrelle; rarely found in hibernation. Larger roosts than common pips.	As Common Pipistrelle, but further work is required to establish how these two species differ in habitat requirements. Tends to be more closely associated with water than the Common Pipistrelle; follows riverside habitats.