

Batscan Ltd Toolbox Talk

Tel: 01903 810119 – mobile 07880 916332/07881 627603 – email: surveys@batscan.org

British Bats

Ecology

- At least 17 species of bat live and breed in the UK, some of which are extremely rare.
- All UK bats feed on insects, which they catch in flight, using echolocation.
- In summer, the females gather in groups which are called nursery colonies.
- Like humans, each mother gives birth to a single pup and, very occasionally, twins.
- Mating takes place in the autumn before bats hibernate for the winter.
- Bats are very long-lived animals with even some small species living up to 40 years.
- The smallest British bat, the pipistrelle, weighs just 5 grams (the weight of a 20p piece).



Bats and the Law

Bats are protected by law under the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) and the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010

- It is illegal to capture, injure or kill bats or damage, destroy or obstruct bat roosts
- Penalties: £5000 per offence - Imprisonment (up to 6 months)
- Licensing: Where significant disturbance to bat, obstruction or destruction of roosts cannot reasonably be avoided by careful methodology and timings, a Natural England Bat Mitigation Licence - European Protected Species Licence (EPSL) - will be required to allow works to continue without causing an offence under British and European Law. A detailed Method Statement must be agreed as part of the licence application. The need for a licence will be determined by your ecologist, who will assess whether or not offences can be avoided by careful consideration to timing and methodology of works. For small numbers of bats, of more common species, a 'low impact' or Bat Mitigation Class Licence (BMCL) may be appropriate.

Where Bats are Found in Buildings

Different species may use different parts of a building for roosting.

Typical roosting areas are:

- Roof voids
- Crevices behind hanging tiles, weather-boarding or other cladding
- Crevices under lead flashing or fascia boards
- Crevices below lifted or missing roof tiles/slates
- Cracks in walls or around structural timbers
- Between roofing materials on flat roofs
- In gaps around mortise and tenon joints, or similar timbers, in old barns

Pre-Works Inspection

Where it is suspected that bats might be found in a building where works are proposed, a pre-works inspection will be carried out, by an ecologist, prior to works. Any features which may support bat roosts will be identified and contractors will be advised regarding which areas must be dismantled carefully, under the supervision of an ecologist.



Pipistrelle droppings in exposed wall cavity



Long-eared bat droppings in roof void

Supervision of Works

Where it has been agreed that works can continue without a licence but under a non-licensed Method Statement (for instance where methodology has been drawn up to ensure that significant disturbance will be avoided, by timing works to occur before bats return to their summer roosts and by reinstating their roosting features, or by avoiding works to roost areas)

- Supervision will include the removal by hand of roosting features
- Timing of works to avoid the most sensitive times of year for bats – ie the peak hibernation season and the summer breeding season
- It will be ensured that the roosting area is made unsuitable for bat use until roosting features are reinstated.

Finding Bats During Works - What to Do

If a bat or bats are discovered during soft stripping etc., works must stop whilst prompt advice is sought from the ecologists.

- If the bat is injured or in immediate risk of injury, it should be carefully moved into a suitable container (the ecologist is likely to have provided a container for emergency use). Bats should be handled with great care using thick gloves, such as gardening type gloves, or a soft cloth to avoid any biting or scratching incidents and also to avoid injury to the bat.
- In the unlikely event of a biting or scratching incident, any wound should be washed thoroughly with hot water and soap. Antiseptic solution can also be used. Because two species of bat found in the UK (Daubenton's bat (*Myotis daubentonii*) and serotine (*Eptesicus serotinus*) can occasionally carry a rabies-related virus, prompt medical advice MUST be sought and if possible, the bat safely contained for identification by an ecologist.
- Except for emergency situations, bats should not be touched or handled, or uncovered if they are in their roost. The ecologist will collect the bat, if necessary, or advise that it should be left to make its own escape. An exclusion device may be used, by the ecologist, if the bat cannot safely be removed.

Post Works Checks

On completion of works, the reinstated or replaced bat roosting features will be inspected to ensure that they are suitable for bat use and, if considered necessary, follow-up surveys will be undertaken.