



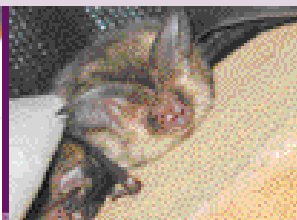
BATS AND THEIR HABITATS



Irish Bats

- Bats are small furry mammals and like all mammals, they suckle their young.
- Bats only have a single baby, giving birth once a year.
- Bats are not blind. At night they use a sonar called echolocation to find food and avoid objects. They do not fly into your hair.
- Bats do not make nests but find small crevices or gaps to roost in.
- Bats are not harmful, but very beneficial. A bat can consume up to 3,000 midges in one night, reducing the need for pesticides.
- There are 10 bat species in Ireland, all of which are protected. Bats have declined in recent years because of a decline in insects and loss of roosting sites.

SPECIES	MAIN ROOSTS	PREFERRED FOOD	WHERE THEY FEED
Common and Soprano Pipistrelles	Buildings and trees	Midges, caddis flies, mayflies, and small moths	Over water, marshes, woodland edge, farmland, hedges, gardens, urban areas
Brown long-eared bat	Buildings and trees	Moths, flies, bugs, earwigs, beetles and spiders	Open woodlands and parkland
Daubenton's bat	Bridges, trees, buildings and under-ground	Small flies, caddies flies and mayflies	Over lakes, rivers and ponds
Natterer's bat	Buildings, trees and underground places	Flies, moths, and spiders	Open woodlands, parkland, hedges, waterside vegetation
Lesser Horseshoe bat	Buildings, caves and tunnels	Midges, moths, lacewings, caddies flies and spiders	Open deciduous woodland, parkland, wetland pasture
Whiskered bat	Buildings and underground places	Moths, other small insects and spiders	Wooded areas often near water
Leisler's bat	Tree holes and buildings	Flies, moths, caddis, flies and beetles	Open woodland, parkland, urban areas
Nathusius's pipistrelle	Tree holes and crevices	Small to medium flying insects	Woodland edges, parkland, over water
Brandt's bat	Buildings and trees	Moths, other small insects and spiders	Wooded areas often near water



Increasing Bat Habitats on Farms



Farmland provides important habitat for feeding and roosting bats. Bats fly along linear features, avoiding open spaces. Hedgerows and treelines are essential in providing connectivity in the landscape.



Roof spaces are likely bat roosts

Provide habitats for insect prey for bats:

- Retain hedgerows, treelines and wooded areas.
- Plant native trees and shrubs, connecting existing hedgerows.
- Plant night-scented plants such as honeysuckle to attract insects.
- Retain wetland areas or create new ones.
- Avoid using pesticides.



Hibernating Lesser Horseshoe bat

Provide habitats as bat roosts:

- Allow bats access to potential roosting sites in outbuildings.
- Retain old mature trees and trees with dead wood and split limbs.
- Leave deadwood in-situ.
- Retain crevices in stone buildings as potential roosts – 20mm gaps suffice.



Left to right:
Common pipistrelle,
Brown long eared bat,
Daubenton's bat,
Soprano pipistrelle
and Natterer's bat

Bat Boxes

- Bats like to roost in trees with naturally occurring holes. Bat boxes provide alternative roosts. They tend to use them from April to October.
- Bat boxes range from traditional wooden boxes to woodcrete (mixture of sawdust, concrete and clay) boxes. A basic bat box is constructed from untreated rough sawn timber. Wood preservatives may harm bats; however mammal-friendly preservatives are available. Treated wooden boxes should be fully dried before erection.
- Schwegler woodcrete boxes which come in various designs have excellent thermal insulation properties with less fluctuation of internal temperature conditions providing a more suitable environment for roosting bats. They also last longer than wooden boxes.
- Wooden boxes are simple to make while Schwegler woodcrete boxes can be purchased from www.alanaecology.com and www.jacobijayne.com



Where to Site Bat Boxes

- Erect on trees or buildings with a south-facing aspect.
- Choose trees with few low branches so bats can easily fly in and out.
- Locate at least 4 metres above ground away from predators and vandals.
- Hang from tree branches near the trunk using wire loop or "tree friendly" aluminum nails.
- Place where they will get sunlight but little wind.
- Site away from outdoor lights.
- Wooden boxes are subject to fluctuating temperatures, so site 3 boxes around the tree trunk facing different directions (except west) to provide choice of environment.

Conservation of bats

Bats are a protected species. Under the Wildlife Act 1976 (2000) it is an offence to intentionally kill, disturb, handle, sell or offer for sale a bat without a licence. Contact your local National Parks and Wildlife Service Conservation officer or Bat Conservation Ireland 046 9242882, info@batconservationireland.org or www.batconservationireland.org

For further information contact your local Teagasc office or www.teagasc.ie.
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