

BAT HABITAT MANAGEMENT

COMMUNITY TOOLKIT

KEY BAT HABITATS:

CONTINUOUS TREELINE
AND HEDGEROW

RIVERS AND STREAMS

SHELTERED WOODLANDS

MEADOWS

ORCHARDS

MATURE TREES

OPEN POOLS AND PONDS

WHY PROTECT BATS?

Bats are truly fascinating nocturnal animals, using echolocation to hunt in the dark. They are the only mammal that has ‘true flight’ it and can be argued that they fly with more flare than birds!

We have 18 species of Bats in the UK protected by law, and referred to as ‘indicator species’ meaning changes to their population signifies changes to the wider biodiversity, therefore key to us understanding the health of our environment.

Bats are our natural pest control eating up to 3000 insects a night! They also do a great job pollinating, and play a vital role in seed dispersal.

THREATS

With Bats natural habitat being destroyed, they are in decline. Destruction of forests, hedgerows & reducing water sources are all bad news for Bats.

Bats rely on green corridors as flight paths for feeding, and with these becoming more fragmented being replaced with roads and buildings, bats are finding hunting and roosting more difficult.

With Bats being our natural pest control, they are valuable to agriculture keeping crop pests at bay. However, with the use of pesticides, there are fewer insects for bats to feed on, making their night flights a waste of their valuable stored energy reserves, and often they enter winter hibernation without the body weight they need to successfully re-produce or survive the winter.



Pipistrelle Bat, Amy Lewis.

“Priority species have declined on average by 58% since 1970”

State of Nature Report

OUR ROLE IN PROTECTING BATS

Bat numbers have plummeted during the 20th century as their habitat becomes less and less. Habitat enhancement can provide a recovery programme for bat populations and everyone can help make this happen. Here’s a few simple things you can do:

PLANT DIVERSELY

When choosing what flower to plant in your garden, be as diverse as you can. Think what plants insects like and you’ll be thinking with Bats in mind too! Think night-scented flowers such as Jasmine and bramble, herbs and aromatics like Lemon Balm, Marjoram and Chives, flowering shrubs including hawthorn, Alder, Goat Willow, and climbers such as Dog-rose, Ivy, Honeysuckle and Field rose. Choose a variety of colors, and if you don’t have a garden, window boxes are just as valuable to help insect numbers too.



PROVIDE A HOME

It’s easier than you think to make a bat box, you can download instructions here: [How to make a Bat Box](#) Or if you prefer to be guided, [Contact your local Bat Group](#) to find out about local bat box making days. Bat boxes are a great mitigation as they may provide a roost for a colony that once used local trees that may not be there anymore.

Building a rockery can provide an excellent roost for bats, particularly building a double sided wall filled with stones as this will also encourage lichens and mosses to colonize making it an attractive

BE LESS TIDY

Wildlife thrives in wild spaces. We often make our gardens too neat and tidy leaving no wild spaces wildlife to make their homes in.

Try to cut back bushes and trees less, leave leaf litter on the ground, throw clippings in a pile rather than in the green bin, make log piles, bug houses, bee feeders. Cut the grass less often and even better, leave a patch of long grass for bugs and insects. If you have space, allow part of your garden to become a meadow or wild flower area to encourage more insects.

All these small measurers make less work for us and more food for the bats! It’s a win-win!

“Over 500 plant species rely on Bats for pollination”

Bat Conservation Trust

PROTECT LOCAL HABITAT

Join a local tree planting community group or maybe plant a tree in your garden.

Learn the art of hedge laying or join a local conservation group who undertake these regularly. If you have fences in your garden, perhaps think about replacing these with hedges, it's a great way to improve local biodiversity and can provide green corridors for bats.

Lobby your local MP to speak out against neonicotinoids and reducing the use of pesticides along your road verges.

BASIC HABITAT MANAGEMENT PRINCIPLES

AVOID FRAGMENTATION OF HABITATS

Loss of bats natural habitat has had a huge determinatal effect on their population across all species. Helping to restore habitats by planting hedgerows and trees can encourage Bats back to an area and in time increase their populatins across the UK. Loss of connecting woodlands and hedgerows makes it harder fo the bats to follow a flight path whilst feeding.

Bats will avoid using a fragmented treeline if there is even a small 10m gap. Planting long line of hedgerows

RESTORE HEDGEROWS

Hedgerows are extremely important habitat for Bats providing shelter, food and orientation. Delayed trimming of hedgerows has shown benefits to Greater Horsehoe, Lesser Horseshoe, and Long Eared Bats in the UK by enhancing the hedgerow as a landmark during the Bats forgaing activiyt and increasing insect prey for Bats to feed on.

A good hedge for Bat habitat is one of diverse shrub layer and a wide margin and is continous connecting with woodlands and other habitats. A ditch will also enhance the value of the hedge to Bats. Mature tall trees like Oaks and Asha are also valuable roosting habitat.

AVOID THE USE OF PESTICIDES

Insect populations are suffering due to the use of insectisides and herbicides, therefore having a huge impact on avilability of food for Bats. Creating buffer zones around hedgerows and water bodies can reduce the spray drift. Avoid using any weed sprays in your garden can help, youll be surprised what beautiful wild flowers pop up!

PROTECT ROOST SITES

All Bat roosts are protected by law in the UK so if you know of a roost, monitor its activity by watching at dawn or dusk, youll likely catch a glimpse of these fascinating animals. Get in touch with our local Bat Group and make them aware of the activity, records are kept within theses groups and it will help them to monitor and protect bat species across the country.