



Bat Species Biodiversity Action Plan

A Wildthings Species Action Plan
2006–2010

Current Status

The UK is home to 17 species of bat in Britain, 16 of which have been recorded in the south west region. 7 species are classified as endangered, including the greater mouse eared bat, which until recently was considered extinct in this country. 6 other species are classified as vulnerable. Of these, 11 have been recorded in the Bath and North East Somerset area, and the district forms part of the national stronghold for a number of rare and endangered species. Two areas in Bath and North East Somerset, one just to the south of Bath and one to the west of the district, form part of Special Areas of Conservation (SAC). These sites are of International Importance for greater and lesser horseshoe bats.

The endangered and vulnerable status of these bats reflect the declines in British bat populations that have occurred in recent years. These have been significant for many species. For example greater horseshoe bat populations declined by 99% during the last century. Even the common pipistrelle, the most abundant and widespread bat species in the UK, is thought to have undergone a significant decline in numbers - estimates from the National Bat Colony Survey suggest a population decline of approximately 70% between 1978 and 1993. Detailed population levels and species distributions are not fully known for bats in the Bath and North East Somerset area.





Lesser Horseshoe Bat

Key factors behind these population declines are damage and loss of traditional breeding and hibernation roosts, and also the loss and reduction of foraging habitats. Specific causes include the use of remedial timber treatments within roofs that are toxic to bats, the conversion of bat friendly roof spaces to non-bat friendly spaces, damage and disturbance to cave sites, and the post-war intensification in agricultural practices. The latter has resulted in significant increases in the use of pesticides and artificial fertilizers, and the conversion of 'bat favourable' ecosystems (frequent small cattle grazed fields separated by substantial hedgerow, with woods, copses and wetlands) to more intensive arable or mixed farming (with no/reduced hedgerows and limited cattle grazing). These changes in agricultural practice have resulted in a severe reduction in insects – the bats food source- and also in further losses of traditional roosts sites and fly ways.

Relevant ecology

There are basic common requirements for all UK bats. These involve access to breeding roosts, hibernation roosts, feeding sites and swarming sites. A range of different roost sites are needed through the year including breeding roosts, hibernation roosts, and transient roost sites. Roosts in roofspaces, cellars, trees, caves, bridges, tunnels can all be important at different times. Access to good insect-rich feeding sites is critical, as are safe and efficient flyways between roost sites and feeding areas.

Current factors affecting bats in Bath and North East Somerset

- Loss and degradation of insect-rich feeding habitat (bat favourable habitat) such as wetlands; permanent cattle grazed pastures; hedgerows
- Loss and disruption of fly way or flight line features (linear landscape features) such as hedgerows
- Reduction in insect prey abundance due to intensive farming practices and inappropriate riparian management
- Disturbance, degradation and loss of breeding sites and hibernation sites
- Lack of full distribution data
- Lack of awareness and understanding about bats in general
- Lack of licensed bat workers

Current action

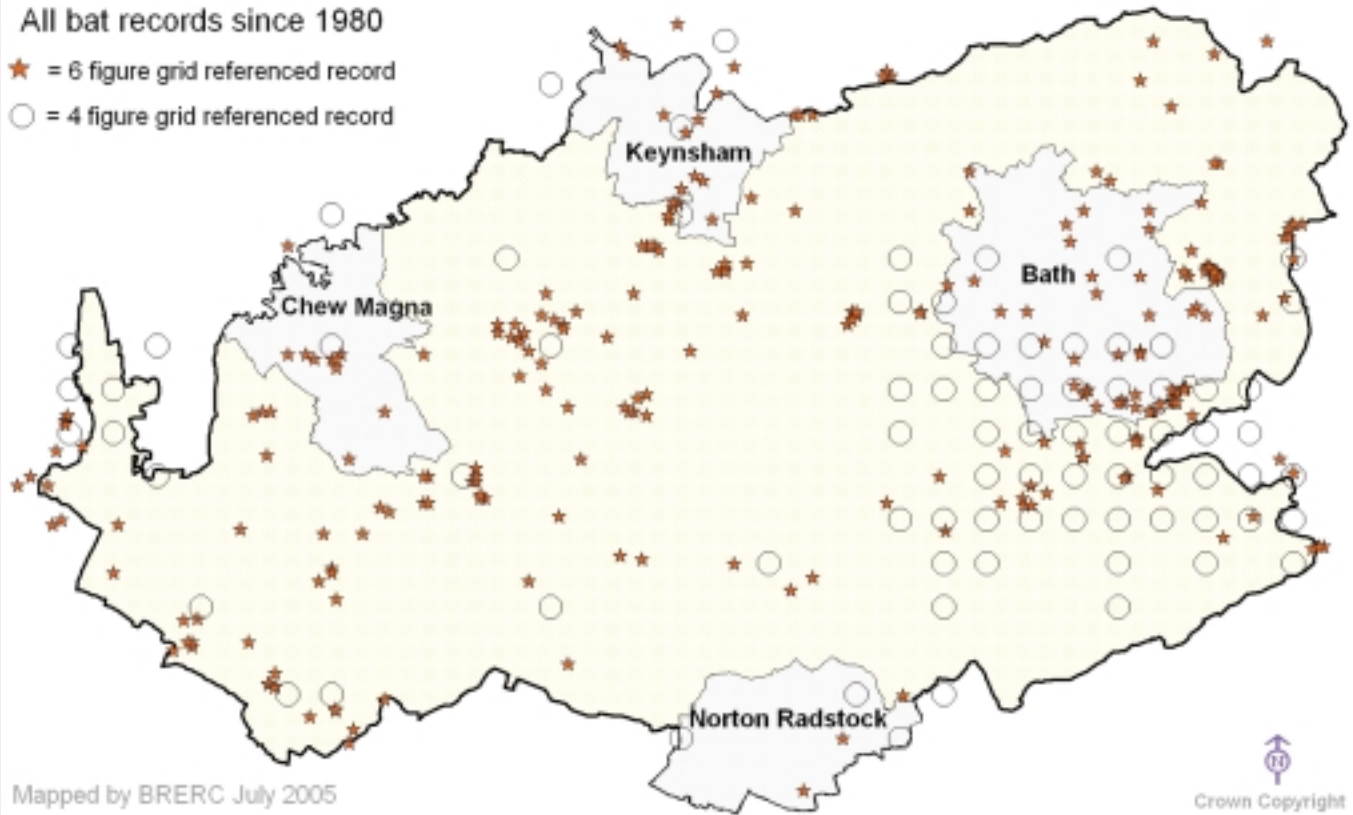
- Batscapes Project (active until November 2006)
- Some surveying and monitoring of different species through the work of Batscapes, consultant surveyors and volunteers
- Guidance to landowners via Avon Wildlife Trust, FWAG and Vincent Wildlife Trust and through Batscapes Project
- Limited guidance to homeowners via Avon Bat Group
- Survey and monitoring of Combe Down Mines SSSI /cSAC
- Protection through general Local Plan Policies and Development Control Process
- Awareness raising through the Avon Bat Group and Batscapes Project
- Biodiversity Action Grant – available to fund provision of bat boxes and habitat improvements

Distribution map

All bat records since 1980

★ = 6 figure grid referenced record

○ = 4 figure grid referenced record



Action plan objectives and targets

- 1 To establish and maintain an audit of bat populations in Bath and North East Somerset
- 2 To continue, extend, and co-ordinate monitoring
- 3 As a minimum to maintain populations and ranges of all species and to increase population levels of UK priority species in Bath and North East Somerset by 25%
- 4 To maintain, enhance, and where possible restore, key feeding areas
- 5 To locate and monitor important roost sites
- 6 To maintain, protect and increase roosting opportunities
- 7 To maintain and protect, or achieve adequate flight ways between roosts and foraging areas
- 8 To increase public awareness about and understanding of bats



Proposed actions with lead agencies

Action	Lead	Measurable Outputs	Objectives	Target Date
A. Develop and implement local development framework policies to protect integrity of bat sites, feeding areas and flyways	B&NES	Policies implemented	3,4,6,7,8	Adopted 2005
B. Monitor impacts to bats through new development	B&NES	Records of bat sites affected and mitigation acheived	2,8	On-going
C. Provide guidance note for developers; tree surgeons; land managers	Batscapes AWT / AWT B&NES	Guidance notes produced	3,4,6,7,8	Produce 2006
D. Promote consideration of 'bat needs' within local and national incentive schemes	Batscapes AWT FWAG	Greater Awareness	3,4,6,7,8	On-going
E. Produce baseline audit of known bat distributions and roost sites in B&NES	Batscapes ABG / BRERC CVWG	Audit produced	1,5	2006
F. Increase survey and monitoring efforts of local bat populations to establish distribution and population data	Batscapes ABG CVWG	Data collected	1,5	2006-2010 initiated Batscapes project
G. Encourage and support local and national bat recording scheme	Batscapes ABG CVWG	Data collected	1,2,8	2006 onwards
H. Plan and implement roost site surveys	Batscapes ABG / EN B&NES / CVWG	No of surveys carried out	5	2005-2006 through Batscapes project
I. Help develop and implement efficient data exchange mechanisms with local and national databases	ABG BRERC B&NES	More efficient data bases	1,2,8	2006 onwards
J. Provide guidance on favourable management of roosts, feeding areas and fly ways	AWT FWAG Batscapes CVWG	Greater Awareness	3,4,6,7,8	2005-2006 through Batscapes project
K. Provide advice to home owners	ABG CVWG	Greater Awareness	6,8	On-going
L. Maintain and expand programme of publicity and awareness raising	ABG AWT Wildthings CVWG	Greater Awareness	8	2005-2006 through Batscapes project
M. Provide and promote training to encourage new bat workers and surveyors	ABG CVWG Batscapes	No. of training events & No. of participants	1,2,8	2005-2006 through Batscapes project
N. Provide incentive scheme and advice to promote creation, restoration and or management of bat favourable habitat	B&NES English Nature DEFRA	No. of projects undertaken	3,4,6,7,8	2006-2010 BAP grants

ABG – Avon Bat group; **AWT** – Avon Wildlife Trust; **B&NES** – Bath & North East Somerset Council; **BRERC** – Bristol Regional Environmental Records Centre; **CVWG** – Cam Valley Wildlife Group; **DEFRA** – Dept Environment, Farming & Rural Affairs; **FWAG** – Farming Wildlife Advisory Group; **Wildthings** – Biodiversity Action Plan Partnership for the B&NES area