Bats (all species)

Our objectives for these species are:

to ensure the maintenance of the full range of species at natural population levels within the district, and

to improve the habitats available to bats.

Daubenton's bat

Introduction

There are 18 or species of bat in Britain (one species now considered extinct in Britain as a breeding species, a new species of pipistrelle, was only separated as distinct in 2005 and several are migratory or vagrant). Eight to ten of these species can be found locally. Each species has its own particular requirements, but as a group they may be found in all habitats. Most species do use buildings, so bats have a special connection with humans.

During the past century, most species are thought to have declined, although there is now some evidence from the National Bat Monitoring Programme that some species are beginning to recover. However, anecdotal evidence suggests that 'bats are not as common as they used to be'. The secretive nature of bats and the difficulties this presented for their study prior to the development of sophisticated technology, makes it hard to quantify the losses.

Bats feed on insects and in summer can often be seen hunting along rivers and woodland edges where insects are numerous. In winter, when insects are difficult to find they hibernate. Although summer roosts are mainly in warm locations, hibernacula are usually in cold places with stable temperatures, such as caves. This helps minimise heat energy loss, an important consideration for small mammals. Being long-lived animals they return to the same places year after year.

Legal status

Bats are European Protected Species. All bats and their roosting places are fully protected under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010. They are also protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). Protection applies to roosts even when the bats are absent.

National status

Around 18 species of bat breed regularly in the UK with the greatest range of species in the south.

Regional status

Nine species occur within Yorkshire and The Humber Region (eight of which have been confirmed to live in North Yorkshire). They are: Whiskered, Brandt's, Daubenton's, Natterer's, Common pipistrelle, Soprano pipistrelle, Noctule, Brown long-eared and Leisler's bats. There are historic records of Lesser horseshoe and Barbastelle bats and casual records of Nathusius' pipistrelle in North Yorkshire.

Local status

In the Harrogate district eight to ten species have been recorded. There were relatively few records until recently and many species and localities are likely still to be under-recorded.

Local species priorities

- **Whiskered bat**
- **Daubenton's bat**
- **Common pipistrelle bat**
- **Nathusius' pipistrelle bat**
- **Brown long-eared bat**
- **Brandt's bat**
- **Natterer's bat**
- **Soprano pipistrelle bat**
- **Noctule bat**

Status of priority species

Common pipestrelle - common and widespread, including around modern suburban housing developments.

Soprano pipestrelle - fairly common and widespread, especially around rivers.

Nathusius' pipistrelle - occasionally recorded in the district. May be increasing and/or under-recorded.

Brown long-eared bat - fairly common and widespread, especially near woodland.

Noctule bat - fairly widespread, although roosts are rarely encountered as they are largely confined to hollow trees.

Daubenton's bat - widespread along river corridors where it often roosts under bridges. The roost at Fountains Abbey is the second largest in North Yorkshire.

Natterer's bat - widely but thinly distributed in North Yorkshire. There is a long-established roost at Fountains Abbey.

Whiskered and Brandts bats - thinly distributed and difficult to tell apart but possibly under-recorded.

Lesser horseshoe bat - used to occur in Nidderdale in the nineteenth century - possibly overlooked?

Further details on the North Yorkshire Bat Group (NYBG) at www.nybats.org.uk/

Requirements

- A variety of maternity and hibernation sites including houses, bridges, hollow trees, caves and tunnels.
- A mosaic of habitats to provide good sources of insects on which to feed, especially trees, hedges, unimproved grassland and freshwater.
- A network of wildlife corridors and habitats to allow bats to move between feeding, roosting and hibernation sites.
- Building works to be planned and timed to avoid disturbing bats and destroying or obstructing roosting places.
- Better understanding of bats and their requirements.
- Monitoring of bats - ideally each roost owner to count their own bats and pass the information to the NYBG.

Threats

- Loss of roost sites and hibernacula both accidental and deliberate e.g. through development of buildings.
- Habitat removal and fragmentation of the landscape leading to disruption of commuting routes.
- Reduction of food sources through the widespread use of insecticides.
- Insensitive management of mature or veteran trees which may support bats.

Current local action

- NYBG holds records of all known bat roosts within the county and provides advice to householders, landowners and others in conjunction with Natural England (NE).

Pipistrelle bat

- The Bat Conservation Trust (BCT), with the support of Government agencies and volunteers, runs the National Bat Monitoring Programme to monitor changes in populations of various species.
- NYBG organises public events to foster a public understanding of bats and their conservation.
- Developers wishing to carry out works which would impact on bat roosts are required to obtain a licence from NE for such works and to provide suitable mitigation measures to enable bat populations to be maintained. The Local Planning Authority is required to consider bats as part of the planning process.
- North Yorkshire County Council (NYCC) surveys all bridges prior to maintenance work.

Opportunities

- Report roosts, including date and time to NYBG.
- Include bat-friendly features when carrying out repairs to buildings e.g. 'bat slates' to permit access to roofspaces or provision of bat boxes on exteriors of buildings.
- Erect bat boxes around parks and gardens and plantation woodlands with few mature or veteran trees.
- Plant night scented garden plants to attract insects on which bats feed.

LINKS WITH OTHER HDBAP PLANS:

Development Guidance Note
Woodland HAP
Wood pasture and parkland HAP
Garden and urban wildspaces HAP