

CARMARTHENSHIRE LOCAL BIODIVERSITY ACTION PLAN

BATS



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Conservation objectives:

- Maintain and enhance the existing populations and distribution of all bat species in Carmarthenshire.
- Seek to increase the number of roosts of all bat species in Carmarthenshire.

What you can do to help:

- Report all bat roosts to the county mammal recorder n.matthew@ccw.gov.uk
- Consider the possibility of bats in buildings/trees before you carry out and work – consult the CCW for advice (01558 825800).
- Put up bat boxes on trees or buildings, especially if close to suitable feeding areas.
- Make your garden more bat friendly by having hedges, trees, ponds and night-scented flowers that will attract insects for bats to feed on.

Further information:

www.bats.org.uk
www.carmarthenshire.gov.uk

Bats wings are modified hands with long fingers connected by a thin membrane that enables them to fly



Ecology

There are 16 species of bat in the UK of which ten species occur in Carmarthenshire. The pipistrelle is our smallest and most common species, whilst the noctule is our largest. Depending on the species bats roost in trees and/or buildings in even tiny spaces, cracks and crevices. Bats feed on insects in a variety of habitats such as farmland, woods, marshes, lakes, gardens and rivers.

Bats give birth just once a year, early in summer, the females tending to gather together in a communal roost to give birth and bring up their young, whilst the males live separately. By the end of the summer these roosts are generally vacated. In winter, they hibernate together, often in caves, and live off body fat stored during the autumn.

Bat populations have declined alarmingly and are amongst our most endangered mammals. In addition to loss of habitats where they feed, loss or damage to roost sites is a major factor in their decline.

Legal status

Bats are listed under the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and the Conservation (Natural Habitats, etc.) Regulations 1994. This makes it illegal not only to kill, injure or take any bat but also to recklessly or intentionally damage, destroy or obstruct access to any place that a bat uses for shelter or protection, or to disturb a bat while it is occupying such a place. A roost is protected whether or not bats are present at the time.

Why are they in decline?

- * Reduction in numbers of insect food due to intensive farming and inappropriate riverbank management.
- * Loss of insect-rich feeding habitats and flyways, due to loss of wetlands, hedgerows and other suitable foraging habitats.
- * Loss of winter roosting sites in buildings and old trees.
- * Disturbance and destruction of roosts, including the loss of maternity roosts due to the use of toxic timber treatment chemicals.

What is being done locally

- * Countryside Council for Wales (CCW) has a database of roosts.
- * CCW advises on best practice when working near bat roosts and more general advice for householders with bats.
- * The council require bat surveys for all barn conversions and provide information to applicants on bats.
- * Some monitoring of summer roosts is carried out.

Where you can look for bats

At dusk throughout the county in suitable feeding habitats apart from the extreme uplands.