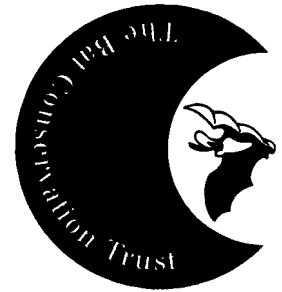


# BATS IN BUILDINGS

*Increasingly bats use buildings for roosting, as natural roosting places in tree holes and caves become more scarce or disturbed. All buildings, in particular the walls, eaves and roofs, are potential roost sites.*



**Anyone working regularly in these areas, such as surveyors, architects, plumbers, roofers, pest technicians, double glazing installers and insulators, should be aware of what signs to look for. Following these guidelines will help you work within the law.**

*This note is for guidance only, and should not be interpreted as law. BCT will not be held responsible for any legal action arising out of this guidance.*

## LEGAL PROTECTION

**All 16 species of UK bat are protected by law. This differs slightly from country to country, but in summary it is illegal to:**

- kill, injure or disturb bats**
- obstruct access to bat roost**
- damage or disturb bat roosts**

because of the following legislation:-

- Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (covers England, Scotland and Wales). Northern Ireland bats are protected by the Wildlife (Northern Ireland Order 1985). The Wildlife Act 1990 is relevant for the Isle of Man.
- Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act 2000 (covers England and Wales).
- The Habitats Directive (Council Directive 92/43/EEC) on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Fauna and Flora.

***In this context 'damage' would include such operations as treatment with toxic chemicals found in wood preservatives. 'Disturbance' includes any work in or affecting a bat roost.***

*Under the law, a roost is any structure or place used by bats for shelter or protection. Because bats tend to re-use the same roosts year after year, the roost is protected whether or not bats are present at the time.*

In order that legislation is not contravened, any building, maintenance, or other operation needing to be carried out must be notified to the relevant Statutory Nature Conservation Organisation (SNCO) or government department in order that it can advise on whether the operation should be carried out and, if so, the method to be used and the timing.

Where works likely to affect bats and/or roosts are proposed for a house that is occupied, your SNCO (EN, SNH, CCW or Environment & Heritage Service NI) needs to be informed in order to advise on whether/how work should proceed.

Where works affect other buildings or structures e.g. tree or bridge works/maintenance, any demolition (including



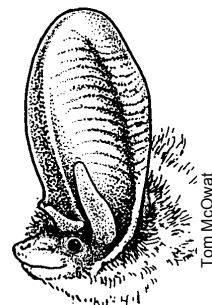
Claire Jones

houses), building maintenance, barn conversions, works to churches, etc, then the appropriate Government department (i.e. DEFRA, Welsh Assembly, Scottish Executive, Environment & Heritage Service NI) needs to be informed and a Habitats Regulation Licence application submitted to and approved by them before any work can commence. Procedures for this can be quite lengthy, so bat surveys should be undertaken as early as possible in the proceedings. ***In all cases, a timely survey by an experienced bat worker can save delays later.***

## WHERE do bats roost in buildings?

**Different sorts of bats prefer different places; some creep into tiny spaces, cracks and crevices. Only occasionally do they hang free, or are they easily visible.**

*Outside they may roost:*



brown long-eared bat

- under weather boarding or hanging tiles
- above soffits and behind fascia and barge boarding
- between window frame and wall brickwork
- in gaps behind cladding tiles or wood
- between underfelt and boards or tiles

- inside cavity walls

*Inside roof spaces they may roost:*

- along the ridge beam
- around the gable end
- around the chimney breast

## LOOKING for the evidence

***Bats do not make nests or cause structural damage. The most obvious sign of their presence is droppings.***

- Bat droppings consist largely of insect remains and crumble easily between your fingers to a powder of semi-shiny fragments.
- Rodent droppings are smooth and plastic, quickly becoming hard. They cannot be crumbled.
- Bat droppings do not present any known health hazards.
- Droppings may not always be readily visible in a loft.
- Large accumulations may reflect use over a number of years rather than large numbers of bats at any one time.

Bat droppings are frequently mistaken for mouse droppings, so do the 'crumble test'.

### **WHEN do bats use buildings?**

*Bats may use buildings at any time, but are most often found in houses between May and August.*

- Mother bats have only one baby a year, suckling it for several weeks. The mothers gather in maternity roosts to have their babies in summer, and this is the time they are most likely to use buildings.
- The bats move away when the young can fly and feed themselves, and have usually left by September.
- Immature individuals, adult males and non-breeding females will occupy a variety of roosts, individually or in small groups.
- Disturbance or the use of toxic chemicals at maternity roosts in houses can have a major impact on bat populations gathered from a wide area.
- Bats do roost in houses in winter, usually individually, but are rarely found.

### **WHICH bats use buildings?**

*All our UK species have been recorded in houses, but some very rarely. Pipistrelle and long-eared bats are the species most usually found.*

*Pipistrelle bats.* Only recently have scientists recognised that two species have been confused under this name. Both sometimes use houses as maternity roosts, choosing confined spaces. These are usually on the outside of the buildings, such as under soffits or behind barge boards or hanging tiles, where the bats can rarely be seen.

*Brown long-eared bat.* This animal mostly prefers older houses with high open roof spaces. Small clusters may be seen at junctions of roof timbers or under the ridge. It is the bat most frequently seen inside lofts, and small numbers may stay longer than other species.

### **BEST PRACTICE for working in bat roosts**

- In order to work within the law, seek advice from the appropriate Statutory Nature Conservation Organisation (SNCO) in any situation where an operation may affect bats or their roosts. (See *Contacts* below).
- If operations have already started when bats or their roosts are discovered, work must stop and the relevant SNCO contacted at the first available moment.

### **PEST CONTROL in a bat roost**

*The control of pests such as wasps, bees, hornets, cluster flies and rodents may unintentionally affect bats or their roosts, so care should be taken when controlling pests in an area where bats are, or are known to have been, present.*

- Rodenticides should not be placed in an open tray below roosting bats.
- Insecticides recommended as safer for use near mammals are based on permethrin and cypermethrin. Obtain details from SNCOs.
- Ask for advice too on the range of fungicides which may be used in sites used by bats.

**Advice must be sought from your SNCO before any action is taken in order to keep within the Law.**

### **CONTACTS**

The Headquarters of the Statutory Nature Conservation Organisations (SNCOs) are:

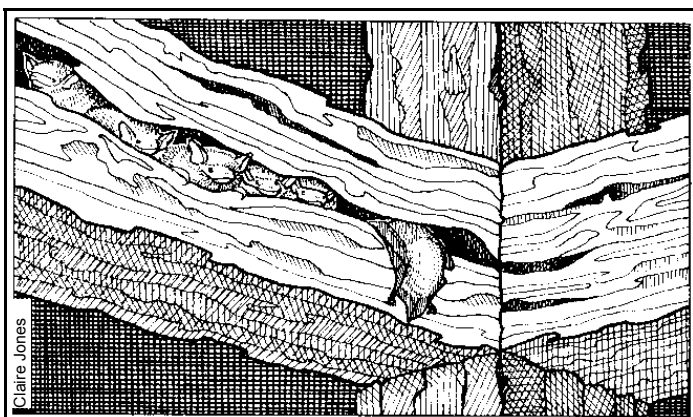
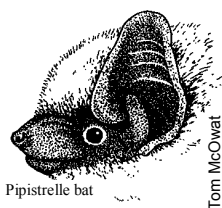
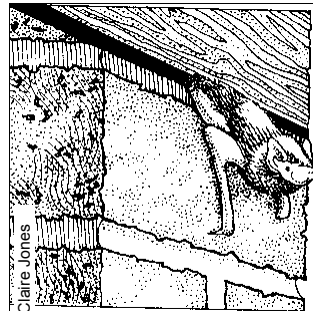
**English Nature (EN),**  
Northminster House,  
Peterborough PE1 1UA  
Tel: 01733 455000  
[www.english-nature.org.uk](http://www.english-nature.org.uk)

**Countryside Council for Wales (CCW),**  
Plas Penrhos, Fford Penrhos, Bangor,  
Gwynedd LL57 2LQ.  
Tel: 01248 385500  
[www.ccw.gov.uk](http://www.ccw.gov.uk)

**Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH),**  
12 Hope Terrace,  
Edinburgh EH9 2AS  
Tel: 0131 4474784  
[www.snh.org.uk](http://www.snh.org.uk)

**Environment & Heritage Service, Commonwealth House, 35 Castle Street, Belfast, N.I. BT1 1GH.**  
Tel: 02890 546558

**When a Habitats Regulations licence is required you need to contact your government department. Your SNCO will be able to advise of its address.**



The Bat Conservation Trust,  
15 Cloisters House  
8 Battersea Park Road  
London, SW8 4BG

Tel: 020 7627 2629 Email: [enquiries@bats.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@bats.org.uk)  
Web site: <http://www.bats.org.uk>

The Bat Conservation Trust is the only national organisation solely devoted to the conservation of bats and their habitats. Write for an information pack and membership details.

November 2001

