

# What if I find a bat on the ground, or flying in my house?



**Bats are normally shy and unobtrusive animals, so if you come across one on the ground during daylight hours or flying inside a building, it is likely to need some help. These guidelines should enable you to assess the situation and determine the correct course of action.**

## ***Bats and the law***

All British bats are protected by law under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and the 1994 Conservation Regulations (in England and Wales they are also protected by the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000). They should normally be handled only by licensed bat workers, but unlicensed people are allowed to handle them for the purpose of rehabilitation and release. If you find a grounded bat, you may need to contact your local bat carer (available via the Bat Helpline number below) to help you.

## ***Grounded bats***

A bat found on the ground during daylight hours is likely to be in trouble already. Sometimes, it may just be exhausted and need a bit of time to recover with a little help. It may be injured or in danger from passing cats so it is better to take it into captivity temporarily and get advice from your local bat group or the Bat Helpline.

Bats are gentle creatures and seldom show any aggression but they are wild animals and may be frightened or in pain. You must take care not to be bitten so wear protective gloves and handle the bat as little as possible. Most of the UK's bats have such small teeth that a bite will not break the skin. However, a strain of the rabies virus has been found in British bats so although the risk is very small, you must take precautions to avoid being bitten or scratched.

Place a box over the bat and use a piece of cardboard to gently and carefully slide the bat into the box. Put a piece of cloth such as an old tea towel loosely crumpled in one corner. The bat will feel safer if it has something to crawl into and hide. Put a few small air holes into the lid and a very shallow container of water in one corner so the bat does not dehydrate.

If it is dark outside you can then let it go by placing the box on its side on the top of a wall or shed, at least five feet off the ground. The bat can then crawl out of the box and fly away when it is ready. If the bat does not fly away within about fifteen minutes, take it back inside and get expert help from your local bat carer, or, if you do not know of one in your area, from the Bat Helpline. If it is day time then keep the bat contained for the day, as described, and then release it that evening.

All British bats are small and you may be surprised at the size. Baby bats are found in June, July or early August. At all other times of the year, it will be fully-grown and independent. Baby bats have little or no fur. A good test is to blow the fur very gently – if it parts then the bat is unlikely to be very young. If you are sure it is a baby, you must get expert help as quickly as possible in order to try to locate the roost and return the baby to its mother.

## ***Bats flying indoors***

A bat flying in a room is looking for a way out! Close the door, open the windows as widely as possible, dim the lights and give it the chance to find its own way out. Bats navigate by sending out high-pitched sounds and listening for the echoes so the bat should soon detect any opening that leads out of the room.

NEVER try to catch a flying bat - you are likely to injure it severely and it may even bite in self-defence.

Sometimes young bats which are inexperienced flyers will become exhausted before finding the way out. They may try to land on a wall or curtains, or they may crash land on furniture or the floor. In this case, you should contain the bat as described above, and then release it in the evening.

If despite precautions you are bitten by a bat or if a bite is suspected:

- Wash the wound immediately with soap and water for at least five minutes. Additional cleansing of the wound site with an alcohol base or other disinfectant is also recommended.
- Seek advice from your doctor about post exposure rabies treatment as soon as possible.
- If the bat is injured get expert help for it; contact your nearest bat worker or the Bat Helpline as soon as possible so that s/he can arrange care for the bat.

For your local bat group contact and more information about bats and bat conservation contact

the **National Bat Helpline** on **0845 1300 228**  
or write to

**The Bat Conservation Trust**  
**15 Cloisters House**  
**8 Battersea Park Road**  
**London SW8 4BG**  
**[www.bats.org.uk](http://www.bats.org.uk)**

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