

PIPISTRELLE BAT (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus* and *P. pygmaeus*)

Species Action Plan

1. Introduction.

Predominantly house dwelling species, both (recently separated) pipistrelles are found around towns and villages where wetlands, farmland, and woodland of all types occur. Summer nursery roosts are typically located behind exterior boarding and between the top of outside walls and the roofing. Individuals are often found in wall crevices and behind notice boards. Winter roosts are found in all kinds of places from trees to buildings. Midges, caddisflies, mosquitoes and mayflies are amongst their prey species. This plan is complementary to the **rivers and burns** and **ancient semi-natural** woodland plans. Work carried out under these plans will also benefit the species.

2. Current Status

2.1 National

The pipistrelle is found throughout northern and central Europe and is by far the commonest bat species in Britain. However available evidence suggests an overall decline of an estimated 70% in the last 20 years.

Bats are protected nationally by the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and under the Conservation (Natural Habitats, etc.) Regulations, 1994.

Bats internationally are protected by the following legislation;

- EC Habitats and Species Directive 1992 Annex IVa.
- The Bern Convention (1979) Appendix III.
- Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (Bonn 1980), including its Agreement on the Conservation of Bats in Europe (London 1991).

The impact on bats locally can be limited by activities laid out in PPG9 (Planning Policy Guidance; Nature Conservation, 1994) or through Local Agenda 21 or BAP processes.

2.2 Local

This species is found throughout the county from the coast to near the head waters of the rivers. Records would suggest that few, if any, towns or villages will be without their resident population. Isolated farm buildings in relatively high locations but with suitable feeding habitat situations have provided roosting sites for the species. Open woodland, woodland edge, tall continuous hedgerows particularly with trees, sheltered wetlands and riverine habitats are all commonly used for foraging. Nothing is known of the pipistrelle's use of upland moorland habitats in the county but research in Yorkshire has established a use at certain times of year. Information on population trends in the county and the distribution of the two recently separated species is not available at present.

3. Current factors causing loss or decline .

3.1 Loss of maternity roost sites in buildings or trees through damage or destruction. This is mainly due to lack of public understanding about bats themselves and the legislation that protects them.

3.2 Loss of hibernation and other seasonally used roost sites for the same reasons as above.

- 3.3 Loss of insect rich feeding habitats through changes in land use; wetlands woodlands and grassland habitats in the main.
- 3.4 Loss of linear landscape features such as tree lines and hedgerows used by bats as flight lines.

4. Current Action

- 4.1. Nationally organised surveying and monitoring (Bat Conservation Trust) - in the county approx. 12 surveyors take part. Locally organised Northumberland Bat Group surveys have been carried out in the county as a whole over the last 13 years. Some survey work has started on Northumberland Wildlife Trust reserves and in Section 39 woodlands in the NNP.
- 4.2. Research into bat ecology is carried out nationally, but little done locally.
- 4.3. A public awareness and education activity programme to improve the understanding and tolerance of bats is ongoing nationally and locally with the Northumberland Bat Group members doing approx. 10 talks and events each year. Approximately 60 roost or site visits are made to domestic properties or habitats in Northumberland at which roost owners are in attendance. Few roost visits are currently made within the NNP at present.
- 4.4. Consultation system with English Nature and Bat Group to protect threatened roosts.

5. Broad Objectives and targets

- 5.1 Establish base line data for the NNP.
- 5.2 Maintain opportunities for roosting.
- 5.3 Increase opportunities for roosting.
- 5.4 Maintain important feeding areas.
- 5.5 Enhance, and where possible restore feeding areas.
- 5.6 Create landscape features to provide flight lines between roosts and foraging areas.
- 5.7 Increase awareness of bats and the legislation protecting them.

6. Proposed Action with Lead Agencies

6.1 Policy and Legislation

Action	Target	Partners	Achieving Objective
6.1.1 Ensure NNPA and Parish councils implement PPG9 for bats, their roosts and their habitats, by applying to all planning applications	All apps. 2002 onwards	EN BG, PCs	2-6
6.1.2 Ensure needs of bats are considered in NNP Local Plan and other development plans.	All plans at next review.	LAs, FC, EA, EN, NWT	2-6
6.1.3 Ensure bats are considered in local and national schemes affecting bat habitats e.g. CS, WGS etc.	Consider bats in schemes 2002 →	FC, DEFRA, EA, EN, FWAG	2-6

6.2 Site Safeguard and management

Action	Target	Partners	Achieving Objective
6.2.1 Carry out habitat improvements on feeding areas.	5 sites by 2010	DEFRA, FE, FC, EN, NWT	4,5
6.2.2 Erect bat boxes where there are no suitable roost sites.	10 per year	NWT, volunteers	2,3
6.2.3 Carry out surgery work on suitable decaying trees to provide roost sites and invertebrate habitats.	In 4 woods by 2010	Contractors, FE, DEFRA, EN, NWT	3,5
6.2.4 Carry out habitat improvements (hedge planting etc.) in areas where there are few suitable linear features.	5 sites by 2010	FC, FE, DEFRA, NWT	6

6.3 Species management and Protection

Action	Target	Partners	Achieving Objective
6.3.1 Promote use of safe, non-toxic methods of timber treatment in historic building refurbishment. Send information with all planning permissions for historic buildings restoration/conversions.	Condition of all contracts let by NNP. All planning permission	EH, BG, EN, NT, NWT	2,3,7

6.4 Advisory

Action	Target	Partners	Achieving Objective
6.4.1 Encourage acceptance and understanding from existing roost owners and provide guidance on favourable management of roosts	approach all roost owners by 2005	BG, EN, NWT	2,3,7
6.4.2 Contact landowners by letter including relevant leaflets to alert them of the importance of roosts, feeding areas and hibernacula.	2002	EN, NWT	2-5,7
6.4.3 Contact the building industry, foresters, tree surgeons, highways departments etc. to ensure that bats are considered when carrying out work in	2003	LAs, FE, BG, NWT, EN, EA	2-5,7

places likely to support them e.g. woodlands, bridges, buildings veteran trees.			
6.4.4 Provide training for volunteers to enable them to check boxes and look for roost sites.	Training day 2003	EN, BG, NWT	1,7

6.5 Future survey and monitoring

Action	Target	Partners	Achieving Objective
6.5.1 Re-survey all known Pipistrelle roosts in the NNP and record which species uses each.	2 per year	BG, volunteers	1
6.5.2 Appeal to NNP residents for roost locations	2002	NWT	1,2,7
6.5.3 Survey for tree roosts - prioritise NNP s39 woodlands.	1 per year	BG, volunteers	1,2
6.5.4 Survey potential hibernacula and protect - prioritise NNP leases, s39 buildings and properties.	1 per year	BG, volunteers	1-3
6.5.5 Ensure storage and handling of data is comprehensive and on central database that all feed into. Link to any future records centre.	Database updated monthly	All	1,7

6.6 Communications and publicity

Action	Target	Partners	Achieving Objective
6.6.1 Maintain publicity and educational activities aimed at LAs, building trades, schools and the public.	2 talks per year	LAs, BG, NWT, EN	2,7
6.6.2 Use bats when promoting the importance of native woodland and rivers and burns in the NNP during the Celebrating Biodiversity dedicated years.	2004 and 2005	Schools, NWT, FE EN, local media.	7