



## GROUPS

Examples from left to right: Greater horseshoe bat (*Rhinolophus ferrumequinum*) 01234lukeorom/CC BY-SA 4.0., Greater horseshoe bat – Hilary Bond, Lesser horseshoe bat (*Rhinolophus hipposideros*) F. C. Robiller, Lesser horseshoe bat – Norman Crowson

# Bats

Information: Hilary Bond

### All about bats

- There are more than 1300 species of bats in the world, making them the second most common group of mammals.
- Bats are found in almost every corner of the planet apart from the North Pole and Antarctica.
- There are 17 breeding species of bats in the UK. Most roost in trees, making use of cracks, holes and loose bark; but where appropriate trees are not available, they will also roost in buildings.
- Blood-sucking vampire bats are real and all 3 of these species are found in South America.
- The smallest bat weighs about the same as a one pence piece and the largest bats have a wing span of just under 2m.
- Bats hang upside down because it enables them to easily escape from predators as they can drop straight into flight. When in flight, bat hearts beat at 1000 times a minute.
- Bats are nocturnal and navigate using echolocation, sending out waves of sound from their mouths or noses which bounce off their surroundings, to help build up a picture of what surrounds them. This is how they can find their way around and hunt for food in the dark.
- Bats eat insects and even a small bat like a pipistrelle can eat up to 3000 insects in one night.
- Bats are really important for pest control and in the US alone bats are thought to eat enough pests a year to save a billion dollars worth of crop damage and pesticide costs.
- Pregnant females will move together to a warmer roost to have their young, sometimes just moving further up a tree or round to the side facing the sunshine.

## Why do bats need our help?

Firstly, climate change is impacting the ability of UK bats to hibernate. This can lead them to emerge early when there is no food around to eat. Secondly habitat loss not only removes vital old wood for bat's maternity roosts, but is also a key supply of insects, resulting in starvation. Disturbance of roosting and nesting sites can also be a major problem and in some parts of the world viral infections can also wipe out populations. Finally, the removal of hedgerows leaves large gaps in habitat corridors that can impact the ability of bats to navigate.

**DID YOU KNOW? Bats are the only mammals that can truly fly rather than glide!**

## How can we help?

- Don't be too tidy in your garden. If you are lucky enough to have a dead tree with loose bark, cracks and holes, you have an ideal bat habitat already in place.
- Encourage insects which bats like to eat by having a pond, night-scented flowers and minimal low-level outdoor lighting.
- Avoid using pesticides and herbicides in your garden and try to keep disturbance to a minimum, so there are lots of insects around.
- Put up a bat box. These should be placed at least 10 feet above the ground and in a place which receives at least 6 hours of sunlight a day; morning is preferred to evening sun. Do not place your bat boxes too near to artificial light.

## Learn more

- The Bat Conservation Trust: [bats.org.uk](https://bats.org.uk)
- [bats.org.uk/about-bats/what-are-bats/uk-bats](https://bats.org.uk/about-bats/what-are-bats/uk-bats)
- [bats.org.uk/advice/gardening-for-bats](https://bats.org.uk/advice/gardening-for-bats)
- [fun-facts.org.uk/animals/animals-bats.htm](https://fun-facts.org.uk/animals/animals-bats.htm)
- Contact an A Rocha UK naturalist at [naturalist@arocha.org](mailto:naturalist@arocha.org)