

Bat survey guidelines

Ecology

There are 18 species of bat in the UK (17 of which are breeding) with their distribution, habitat requirements and rarity differing between each species. The south and south west of the UK tends to support the rarest bat species and the greatest number of bat species.

Bats are typically active from April to October and hibernate during November to March. They can be found roosting within buildings, trees and caves and forage across a range of habitats including watercourses, woodland and open grassland



Legislation

All UK bats are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and the Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019. Consequently, it is an offence to intentionally or recklessly disturb a bat whilst it is occupying a roost and intentionally or recklessly damage or destroy a roost, even if the roost was not in use at the time (for example the destruction during the winter months of a maternity (breeding) roost which is normally only occupied in the summer.

Survey effort required

To ensure that Local Planning Authority and the relevant competent authority can successfully determine either a planning application or a licence application it is important that sufficient survey data is gathered. In the UK, surveys typically follow the standards set within the Bat Conservation Trust (BCT) (2016) Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (3rd Edition). Deviation from these guidelines needs to be fully justified and could lead to the refusal of planning permission or a licence application.

With reference to the BCT guidelines the following surveys can be undertaken.

Developments where impacts on a roost may occur

Internal inspection of buildings/ tree climbing surveys- Where access permits a licenced ecologist is able to undertake an inspection of a tree or building to determine the presence or absence of bats, based on



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the actual presence of bats or other signs such as droppings. Typically, these surveys can be undertaken at **any time of the year**.

Such surveys are not always conclusive and/ or cannot be safely undertaken due to the condition of the building or tree. In such cases additional survey methods may be required if absence cannot be confirmed.

Emergence/ re-entry surveys- Emergence and re-entry surveys survey for bats are typically undertaken 1.5 hours after dusk or 1.5 hours before dawn, with a maximum of three survey visits undertaken for trees/ buildings considered to have high potential to support roosting bats. Survey visits should normally be spaced at least one month apart to ensure adequate coverage of the active season. These surveys can only be completed between **April and September** inclusive.

Developments where impacts on foraging habitat may occur

Activity surveys- Where development works will result in the loss of potentially significant areas of foraging habitat or disrupt bats as they commute between roosts sites and foraging habitat, activity surveys will be recommended. These surveys are used to determine how bats utilise a site, which species and the numbers present and can only be completed between **April and October**

Survey effort ranges from one survey visit per season (spring, summer, autumn) for habitats of low value up to two survey visits per month between April and October for habitats considered to be of high value. Additionally, transect surveys are supported by the deployment of static bat records over several nights per season or month. The data collected from all survey work is then analysed and used to inform an appropriate mitigation scheme, designed in conjunction with the requirements of the client.



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