

The Bats of Dorset

www.dorsetbatgroup.org.uk



Brown and Grey long-eared bats (*Plecotus auritus* & *Plecotus austriacus*)

With their huge ears (up to 40mm long!) these bats are instantly recognisable, although their habit of curling their ears into 'rams horn' when at rest can cause confusion. Both are medium sized bats, with a wingspan of around 270mm, but are very difficult to tell apart, although the Grey long-eared bat, with its darker face, appears to wear a bandit style mask! Brown long-eared bats are one of the most frequently recorded bats in lofts and, in Dorset nearly 200 roosts have been identified, with a further 350 possible roosts. Of these, only a handful are over 50 bats. They like to hang along the apex and droppings scattered under the highest point of the roof are a classic sign these bats are using a roof. The Grey long-eared is much rarer, being restricted to a few scattered areas along the south coast of Britain. In Dorset some 12 roosts are known, each containing just a few bats.

Hugh Clark & Bat Conservation Trust

Pipistrelle bats (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus* and *Pipistrellus pygmaeus*)

This is the smallest bat in the UK, but also the most numerous, with an estimated population of 2 million individuals. It is also one of the most frequently recorded bats in houses, with around 350 known roosts in Dorset, although its habit of squeezing between the roof tiles and the felt means that

many householders are unaware they are there. Some spectacular roosts of many hundreds have been recorded, but these are the exception and a typical roost contains only a few tens of bats. Recent research has revealed that there are two species of pipistrelle, distinguished by the frequency of their echolocation calls. The two species overlap, although *Pipistrellus pygmaeus* may favour foraging over rivers, streams and open water.

Hugh Clark & Bat Conservation Trust

Serotine (*Eptesicus serotinus*)

This large bat is the second most frequently recorded species in roof spaces and can be found roosting around chimney breasts or around the gable ends and large droppings in these places is the classic sign. Although relatively common in Dorset the Serotine does not occur in the north

of the UK. The Serotine is a slower flyer than the similar sized Noctule, often flying below treetops level along hedgerows, and flying slowly over open pasture, occasionally dropping to take insects from near ground level.

Hugh Clark & Bat Conservation Trust

Noctule and Leisler's bats (*Nyctalus noctula* and *Nyctalus leisleri*)

At around 35 grammes, and with a wingspan of around 400mm, the Noctule is the UK's largest bat and is one of the earliest to emerge, often before dusk. It is long winged and flies high and fast, travelling many kilometres in a night in search of food. Its fur is reddy-brown, quite sleek and one coloured. The slightly smaller, and much rarer, Leisler's bat has two-tone fur and appears less sleek. Both Leisler's and Noctules are very much

tree bats, although Leisler's do make some use of buildings. This makes identifying their roosts very difficult and most sightings of Noctules are in flight. Within Dorset only 8 Noctule roosts are known. There is only one record of a Leisler's roost in the county.

Phil Richardson & Bat Conservation Trust

Barbastelle (*Barbastella barbastellus*)

A very rare bat, the Barbastelle has a distinctive pug like face, with its ears joined at the base over the top of its head, and its fur is very dark, almost black in colour. It favours woodland habitats, often with a rich structure and hibernates in crevices. There are no

known nursery sites in Dorset, although a few individual bats are recorded each year.

Dorset's Rarer Bats

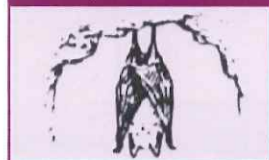
Mouse-eared (*Myotis myotis*)

The Mouse-eared bat was never numerous in Dorset, or the UK, and in fact, until recently, it was thought to be extinct in the county as a whole. One or two recent sightings in Sussex, however, bring some hope that a maternity colony may yet still exist somewhere.

Nathusius' Pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus nathusii*)

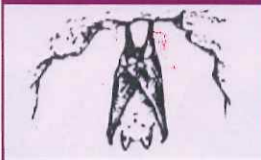
Still a very rare bat in Britain, with only a handful of breeding colonies known, Nathusius pipistrelle has been recorded in Dorset on very few occasions, but separating it from its more common cousins is difficult, so more may be waiting to be found.

January



Hibernating. Using stored fat as fuel.

February



March



Signs of limited activity: small numbers feeding at night.

April

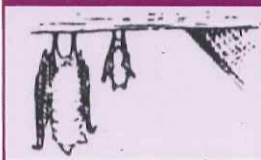


May



Fully active. Females search for suitable nursery sites.

June



July



Mothers suckle their young. Some young almost full size; others still very small.

August



September

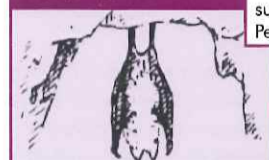


Mating takes place. Fat begins to build up ready for winter.

October



November



Bats begin hibernation, becoming torpid for longer periods.

December



Hibernating.

Greater horseshoe bat (*Rhinolophus ferrumequinum*)

Around the size of a pear, this is one of the UK's largest bats, and also one of its rarest. During summer it prefers sites such as barns and roof spaces for roosting, and, like its smaller relative the Lesser horseshoe, needs a clear, open access route. When hibernating it chooses cool humid places, often found in cellars, mines and tunnels. In Dorset nearly 30 roosts have been found, but many of them contain quite small numbers of bats, with only 2 regularly containing more than 100 bats. Greater horseshoe bats forage over pasture and within broad-leaved woodland.



Phil Richardson

Lesser horseshoe bat (*Rhinolophus hipposideros*)

This small bat is only about the size of a plum, much smaller than its cousin, the Greater horseshoe. Like its cousin, the Lesser horseshoe is also nationally rare. In Dorset, under 30 roosts have been identified, most being quite small, with the largest containing less than 50 individuals. Lesser horseshoe bats like to feed over sheltered wooded valleys and breed in roof spaces. They hibernate underground where, like their larger cousins, they will hang free from the ceiling.



Conor Kelleher & Bat Conservation Trust

Whiskered and Brandt's bats (*Myotis mystacinus* & *Myotis brandtii*)

It was only in the 1970s that it was recognised these were two different species and there is still much to learn about both of them, although the Whiskered bat is believed to be the more common of the two. They are quite small bats, only a little larger than the Pipistrelle, and, like that species, can be found in buildings, under ridge tiles, hanging tiles and between roof tiles and the felt. Around 60 roosts have been found across the county.



Phil Richardson & Bat Conservation Trust

Natterer's bat (*Myotis nattereri*)

Natterer's bat is remarkable for having a fringe of stiff hairs along its tail which it uses to sweep insects off vegetation. It uses a wide range of habitats, from open spaces to quite dense woodland, where its relatively broad wings give it great manoeuvrability, including, possibly, the ability to hover. Another medium-sized bat, Natterer's will roost in houses and around 70 such roosts are known in Dorset.



John Kaczanow & Bat Conservation Trust

Daubenton's bat (*Myotis daubentonii*)

Another medium sized bat, the Daubenton's (otherwise known as the water bat) is very closely associated with water and can be seen skimming in graceful arcs within a few centimetres of the surface of rivers and ponds throughout the county. In Dorset, around 15 roosts are known, mostly in trees and stone buildings. Given the frequency of sightings of Daubenton's bats over bodies of water in the county, this is probably a significant underestimate.



John Kaczanow & Bat Conservation Trust

Bechstein's bat (*Myotis bechsteinii*)

This is one of the rarest bats in the country and, until recently, very little was known about them. Research in the last few years has increased our knowledge of this medium sized bat and several roosts have now been identified, Dorset being a key area for them. The Bechstein's bat has large ears and feeds in broad-leaved woodlands with a good understorey, foraging quite close to the roost site.



Colin Morris

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