

Habitat Factsheet: Suburban, Parkland & Farmland

Introduction

This fact sheet concentrates on bat species that are present in northern Britain and their association with habitats that are influenced heavily by human activity, which includes; suburban, parkland and farmland. Although these may not appear immediately attractive to bats, in fact some species are able to maintain successful populations in these habitats. Areas with freshwater, trees, hedgerows and gardens can sustain insect populations upon which bats feed, and in some cases (i.e. golf clubs) we are now actively encouraging bats as they help considerably in controlling insect numbers. With suitable roosting in man-made structures and the linear features that are often present, you can begin to see that bats can live side by side with human activity provided we plan with their needs and those of the wider environment in mind.



Habitat Requirements For Bat Species

In order to sustain a viable population and indeed survive bats require the following within their locality:

Roosting Sites - A choice of different roosts (including alternatives): In the vicinity of these habitats roosts tend to be in private dwellings, commercial properties, outbuildings, decaying trees, tunnels and bridges. In winter, hibernating bats may roost in older structures, tunnels, disused mines and caves that have a stable internal environment, free from human disturbance and unaffected by fluctuations in temperature or humidity.

Commuting Corridors - The presence of linear features along which bats can navigate: In this habitat the linear corridors created by water courses, tree lines, hedgerows, ditches and garden landscaping within housing estates can be ideal for allowing bats to navigate around their environment. Linear features leading to other areas will attract bats from further away or give local bats alternative areas to explore in order to exploit other roosting/foraging opportunities.

Foraging Sites - A healthy supply of food (insects): It is important that insect populations thrive in areas that could be utilised by bats. Grasslands/unimproved pasture/meadow help sustain diverse vegetation and therefore insect populations. Habitat surrounding farmland, within parks or suburban areas in which trees and other suitable vegetation are present is important for sustaining healthy insect populations and can also provide areas upon which bats are heavily reliant upon for feeding. Native hedge species such as hawthorn, blackthorn and hazel are ideal not only for insects but also creating the linear habitat required. In built up areas white street lighting attracts insects and a few bat species are happy to exploit these. Because bats eat vast numbers of insects (a pipistrelle up to 3000 in an evening), we are now, at last, beginning to see the positive role bats play in controlling insect numbers and making our own lives more comfortable.

Conclusion - If any of the features shown below are not available/removed then bat populations will struggle to be successful locally.



Habitat Management

- Maintain/create meadow, unimproved pasture and natural grasslands. Vary grass height in amenity areas.
- Retain native trees and hedgerows and fill any gaps in such habitat with native species. Maintain/create other suitable linear features connecting good foraging/roosting areas. Plant native night scented flowers in gardens.
- If spraying fields etc. establish buffer zones falling short of valuable habitat/water.
- Instead of felling, consider surgery to dangerous trees retaining the potential for roosting. Whilst involved with managing trees be aware that bats may be present and consult with your local SNCO if in any doubt.
- Maintain/create suitable freshwater habitats connected by linear features. Improve water quality.
- Erect bat boxes in areas where suitable roosting is not available. Consider adopting bat friendly features in new/existing buildings/bridges and the like.

Notes:

- (1) It is illegal to destroy/damage a bat roost even if bats are not present at the time.
- (2) Expert advice should always be sought so that any changes do not impact negatively upon other aspects of the environment.

Roosts
(including alternatives)



Commuting
Corridors



Foraging
Areas

Bat Species Most Strongly Associated With This Habitat:

Species	Dependency	Roost Locations	Foraging Behaviour
Soprano pipistrelle	HIGH Foraging/ Roost	Maternity roosts often in buildings. Otherwise may be found roosting in trees	Forages in association with freshwater habitat. (edge habitat) Captures insects by hawking.
Bandit pipistrelle	HIGH Foraging/ Roost	Maternity roosts often in buildings. Otherwise may be found roosting in trees	Forages in all suitable habitats. (edge habitat) Captures insects by hawking.
Brown long-eared	MEDIUM Foraging/ Roost	Roosts in tree crevices & roof voids in older buildings.	Forages within parkland and open woodland. (closed/edge habitat) Captures insects by gleaning & hawking
Daubenton's	MEDIUM Foraging/ Roost	Roosts in tree crevices, bridges, tunnels & buildings close to freshwater habitat.	Forages low over calm stretches of water. (confined/edge habitat) Captures insects by hawking & skimming.

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