

Richmond upon Thames Species Action Plan Bats



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1. Aims

- To reverse the current population declines of bats in London Borough of Richmond upon Thames
- To redress public misconceptions about bats and secure their status as culturally valued species.

2. Introduction

Bats are highly adapted nocturnal mammals – the only mammals to have evolved powered flight. Often thought of as flying mice, they are in fact more closely related to humans than to rodents, and form a special group of their own: the *Chiroptera*, meaning ‘hand-wing’. Bats are generally only seen briefly at dusk and their seemingly furtive nocturnal habits have, over generations, resulted in popular misconceptions and even a misplaced fear of them. Modern horror stories, films and the media quoting fiction as fact have not helped to improve this tainted public image.

British bats only eat insects. Serving as natural insecticides, they consume huge numbers and variety of prey – a single pipistrelle can eat 3000 midges in a night. With the loss of natural roost sites in trees and woodlands, many bats have adapted to living in buildings. Some favoured householders may therefore be surprised to discover these unexpected lodgers for a short period during the summer, when female bats need somewhere warm to raise their young. Their reliance on buildings for roosting greatly focuses conservation efforts on people's tolerance and goodwill. Bats are an excellent indicator of the quality of our environment, as their complex ecological requirements leave them highly sensitive to environmental changes. Their serious decline should be of major concern to us all.

All of the Borough's bat species are dealt with collectively in this plan because:

- Those currently concerned with the conservation of bats deal with all species;
- All bat species and their roosts are equally protected by law;
- The conservation problems faced by all bats are believed to be generally similar, so measures proposed here are likely to be of benefit to a number of species.



3. Current Status

Eleven bat species are known to occur in Richmond-upon-Thames and at least six are thought to breed. Common and soprano pipistrelle are by far the most widespread, while the noctule, brown long-eared bat and Daubenton's bat are more localised but regularly recorded. Two nationally rare species, Nathusius' pipistrelle and Leisler's bat, are regularly recorded in the borough. Serotine and Natterer's bat are occasionally recorded, the latter confirmed as a breeding species in 2009. Whiskered/Brandt's bat is also strongly suspected to occur in the borough. Important sites in the Borough for bats include the London Wetland Centre in Barnes, the River Crane valley, Richmond and Bushy Parks, Stain Hill reservoirs, as well as various sites within the River Thames corridor, such as Petersham Lodge Woods and Lonsdale Road reservoir.

Worryingly, a repeat survey undertaken in 1999 found that there has been a significant decline in Greater London's bat populations since the mid-1980s, particularly for the noctule and the serotine (Guest *et al.*, 2000). A study in 2007 again showed a significant decline for noctule between 1999 and 2006 (Briggs *et al.*, 2007). Some of the probable causes of this are summarised below.

Current bat species listed on the UK BAP are:

- Greater horseshoe Last recorded in Greater London in 1953, historic status in RuT unknown
- Lesser horseshoe Last recorded in Greater London in 1953, historic status in RuT unknown
- Barbastelle Last recorded in Greater London in 1968, last recorded in RuT in 1946
- Bechstein's bat Not recorded in Greater London, historic status in the region unknown
- Noctule Regularly recorded in RuT, though evidence of a decline in Greater London
- Soprano pipistrelle Regularly recorded in RuT, including known breeding roosts
- Brown long-eared bat In RuT mainly recorded in Royal Parks, including known breeding roosts

4. Specific Factors Affecting the Species

4.1 Loss of maternity roost sites in buildings or trees

Destruction of, disturbance or damage to vulnerable maternity roosts can result from entrenched attitudes towards maintenance and management, a lack of public awareness and understanding of bats, as well as continued ignorance of the legislation protecting them.

4.2 Loss of and disturbance to other roost sites

Hibernation and other seasonal roost sites can be disturbed or damaged for the same reasons as above. These sites include buildings (mainly their roof spaces), trees, bridges and various underground structures, such as cellars, and disused tunnels.

4.3 Loss of feeding habitats

Changes in land use (including development) can result in the loss of insect-rich feeding habitats such as wetlands, woodlands and grasslands.

4.4 Disturbance to commuting routes

Flight paths to and from feeding areas and roosts may be disturbed through the loss of flight line features such as green corridors, or through introduction of new features such as artificial lighting.

5. Current Action

5.1 Legal status

All species of bat are protected in the UK through their inclusion on Schedule 5 of the *Wildlife and Countryside Act, 1981* (as amended by the *Countryside and Rights of Way Act, 2000*), and on Schedule 2 of the *Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010*. The latter further implements European legislation protecting bats. Bats are also protected from cruel ill-treatment by the *Wild Mammals (Protection) Act, 1996*.

The UK is a signatory to the *Agreement on the Conservation of Bats in Europe (EUROBATS)*, which came into force in 1994, set up through the *Bonn Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals, 1979*. While this is not strictly a legal instrument, as a signatory the UK is obliged to abide by such agreements.

5.2 Mechanisms targeting the species

5.2.1 Bat wardens

The London Bat Group co-ordinates a network of licensed bat wardens, working in liaison with Natural England to safeguard bat roosts (particularly those in houses) that may be under threat. Participants are active within the London Borough of Richmond.

5.2.2 Awareness-raising

The place of bats in London life is promoted regionally and locally by organisations such as the London Bat Group, London Wildlife Trust, the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust at Barnes, The Royal Parks and the Borough Council through a programme of guided walks, illustrated talks, training and articles. The Bat Conservation Trust, Natural England and the London Bat Group have produced various publications, including a series of specifically targeted leaflets aimed at promoting best practice in relation to bats within the building, pest control and arboricultural professions.

5.2.3 Survey and Research

London Bat Group volunteers based within the Borough participate in national and local surveys and research, including the Bat Conservation Trust's National Bat Monitoring Programme.

6. Actions

Please note that the partners identified in the tables are those that could be involved in the process of implementing the plan. It is not an exclusive list and new partners are both welcomed and needed. The leads identified are responsible for co-ordinating the actions - but are not necessarily implementers.

Action	Target Date	Lead	Other Partners
RB01 - Promote best tree work practice with links to appropriate websites information such as BCT's 'Bats In Trees' & other appropriate publications	2012	LA	BCT, LTOA, LBG
RB02 – Run one day arborist/ecology course in Richmond Park for arborists and ecologists	Annual	BCT	TRP
RB03 - Maximise the roosting opportunities for prospecting bats by encouraging land	Ongoing	LA	LBG, TRP, TCV, TW, Network Rail



managers and property owners to follow good practice guidelines			
RB04 – Promote available grant schemes to encourage appropriate foraging habitat management	Ongoing	LA	LBG, DEFRA, FC, TRP, LTWGS
RB05 – Write, distribute and promote a Bat Advice Note to all Borough planners & key developers	2012	Working group	BCT, GLA, NE, GLA, WLO
RB06 - Distribute appropriate information to major roofing contractors & pest control companies	2012	LA	NE, LBG, BCT, Trade Associations
RB07 – maintain annual borough participation in NBMP at at least 10 sites	Annual	BCT	LBG
RB08 - Contribute to database of records for all bats in London	Annual	LBG, GiGL	GIGL, WWT, TRP, LNHS
RB09 – Identify potential sites for roost and hibernaculum creation opportunities	2012	Working group	LBG, LA, RBP
RB10 – Create new roost opportunities on 8 identified sites	2015	Working group	LBG, LBR, WWT, TCV, EA, TLS, TW, LWT, TRP, RYOT, Network Rail
RB11 – Encourage large planning applications close to either the river/SSSI to incorporate a bat corridor within their scheme	Ongoing	LA	
RB12 - Promote and support a co-ordinated programme of guided bat walks, attracting a total of at least 500 people per annum	Annual	LA, LBG	LA, BCT, LWT, WWT, TRP
RB13 – Promote and support a programme of event attendance, illustrated talks and popular written articles in local press	Annual	LA	LBG, LWT, WWT, Local Media
RB14 - Run a training course in use of bat detectors	Annual	WWT, LBG	BCT
RB15 - Run a training course for potential leaders of bat walks	Biennial	Working Group	LBG, LA, BCT
RB16 – Prepare a connectivity strategy and map of Richmond Borough identifying key habitats, known roosts, good/poor connectivity, light pollution etc.	2012	Working Group	LA, TLS
RB17 –Ensure Richmond and Bushy Park management plans include actions to protect known bat roosts and enhance habitat, particularly for brown long-eared and Natterer's bat.	2012	TRP	Working Group

7. Relevant Action Plans

7.1 Local Plans

River Thames; Ancient Parkland/Veteran trees; Reedbeds; Broadleaved Woodland

7.2 London Plans

Woodland; The Tidal Thames; Private Gardens; Rivers & Streams; Reedbeds; Churchyards and Cemeteries; Parks, Amenity Grasslands and City Squares; Open Landscapes with Ancient/Old trees Audit.

7.3 National Plans

Built Environment and Gardens; Greater horseshoe, Lesser horseshoe, Barbastelle, Bechstein's, Noctule, Soprano pipistrelle, Brown long-eared,

8. Key References

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- Herbert, Clive (1996). *A check-list of the mammals of the London Area, 1900-1994*: The London Naturalist, no. 75. LNHS
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9. Abbreviations and Abbreviations

BCT - Bat Conservation Trust
FC – Forestry Commission
GIGL - Greenspace Information for Greater London
GLA - Greater London Authority
LA - Local Authority (London Borough of Richmond upon Thames)
LBG - London Bat Group
LBP – London Biodiversity Partnership
LNHS - London Natural History Society
LTOA - London Tree Officers Association
LWT - London Wildlife Trust
LTWGS – London Tree and Woodland Grant Scheme
NBMP - National Bat Monitoring Programme
NE – Natural England
RBP – Richmond Biodiversity Partnership
RYOT – Richmond Youth Offending Team
TCV - The Conservation Volunteers
TLS – Thames Landscape Strategy
TRP – The Royal Parks
TW - Thames Water
WLO - Wildlife Liaison Officer (Metropolitan Police)
WWT - Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust

10. Contact

The Lead for this grouped Species Action Plan is Philip Briggs

Philip Briggs

Email: philip.briggs1@btinternet.com

