

Habitat Factsheet: Woodland

Introduction

This fact sheet concentrates on bat species that are present in northern Britain and their association with woodland habitat, which includes; broadleaved and coniferous. Most UK bat species are dependent upon trees or woodland habitat to some extent for roosting or foraging. In particular native broadleaved tree species are good for bats because they attract good roosting opportunities, sheltered environments and a diversity of insect species (bat food). Certain tree species (i.e. oak, ash, beech, Corsican pine and Scots pine) are prone to the presence of crevices, woodpecker holes and/or decay in such a manner that creates ideal roosting opportunities. Generally speaking non-native commercial coniferous plantations are not as attractive to bats as they sustain less diverse insect communities and good roosting features occur less often.



Habitat Requirements For Bat Species

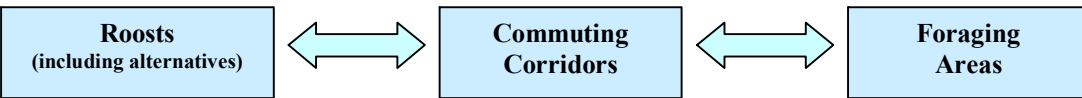
In order to sustain a viable population and indeed survive bat species require the following within their locality:

Roosting Sites - A choice of different roosts (including alternatives): Within woodland habitat bats will use a number of suitable trees depending upon season, disturbance, parasite infestation or changes in weather conditions. Male bats often have different roosting requirements to females and in certain species (i.e. Noctule) the male bats will establish a harem in a suitable tree and defend its territory, whilst at the same time attracting females for mating. Hibernating bats may roost deep within tree crevices, however many species move into old structures, mines, tunnels or caves that have a stable internal environment, free from disturbance and unaffected by fluctuations in temperature or humidity.

Commuting Corridors - The presence of linear features along which bats can navigate: Woodland edges and the corridors created by water courses, woodland rides/paths or roads provide suitable navigational features for bats. Also, linear features (i.e. tree lines/hedgerows) leading into the habitat from other suitable areas will allow bats to enter and leave the area in search of other suitable roosting/foraging sites.

Foraging Sites - A healthy supply of food (insects): Native woodland provides ideal conditions for insect abundance and diversity. Glades, rides and open areas provide increased plant and insect diversity as well as sheltered habitat within which bats can feed. On windy nights, the leeward side of woodland edges/tree lines and the like produce calmer areas where insects will remain active and as such available for bats to feed upon.

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



Habitat Management

- Retain the dead/decaying sections of trees. Instead of felling, consider careful surgery to make safe. Do not fell or lop any tree that possibly could contain a bat roost. If surgery or felling is required a proper assessment of the tree should be carried out by an experienced person and advice sought from Scottish Natural Heritage or Natural England.
- Keep as many native trees of different ages and variety as possible. This will act as suitable sheltered foraging habitat and in years to come may provide suitable roosting features.
- In coniferous woodland, plant broad-leaved native species along rides and around the edges. Consider adding other features such as ponds/scrub zones etc. to encourage insect diversity.
- Encourage native vegetation. Replant gaps in tree lines and hedgerows. Avoid fragmentation/loss of suitable habitat.
- Protect/create wet woodland areas.

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.

Bat Species Most Strongly Associated With This Habitat:

Species	Dependency	Roost Locations	Foraging Behaviour
Brown long-eared	HIGH Foraging/Roost	Roosts in tree crevices & roof voids in older buildings.	Forages within open woodland & parkland (closed/edge habitat) Captures insects by gleaning & hawking.
Natterer's	HIGH Foraging/Roost	Roosts in trees, tunnels, older buildings with roof voids & other structures.	Forages within all woodland habitats (closed/edge habitat) Captures insects by hawking & gleaning.
Soprano pipistrelle	HIGH Foraging / Non maternity roosts	Maternity roosts often in buildings. Otherwise may be found roosting in trees.	Forages near to freshwater habitat. Often found in woodland areas. (edge habitat) Captures insects by hawking.
Bandit (or Common) pipistrelle	HIGH Foraging / Non maternity roosts	Maternity roosts often in buildings. Otherwise may be found roosting in trees.	Forages in all habitats (inc woodland). (edge habitat) Captures insects by hawking.
Noctule	HIGH Roost	Roosts in trees (decaying trees or abandoned woodpecker holes).	Forages above woodland & other suitable areas especially near water. (open habitat) Captures insects by hawking & swooping.
Whiskered	HIGH Foraging/Roost	Roosts in trees & buildings.	Forages in woodland & associated riparian habitat. (edge habitat) Captures insects by hawking & gleaning.

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