



BAT CONSERVATION
IRELAND

INTRODUCTION TO IRISH BATS



WHAT IS A BAT?

Bats are mammals, which means that they have fur, have warm blood, give birth to young, and female bats feed their young with milk. They have wings, which means that they can achieve true flight, the only mammals which have the ability to do so. Irish bats are quite small, ranging in weight from 5-12gm and fully grown bats can sometimes be mistaken for babies. Their wingspan can range from 20cm to 32cm, which can make them seem a lot bigger than they are, when they are in flight.

Leisler's bat. Photograph by Paul van Hoof.



WHERE DO THEY LIVE?

Irish bats hibernate over the winter season, from approximately mid-late Autumn to mid-late Spring / early summer. Not much is known about where Irish bats hibernate during this period, although it is thought that they seek out cool, stable environments for hibernation. When bats wake from hibernation they return to roosts which they may have used before. Female bats form maternity roosts, where they give birth to and raise their young, until they are ready to learn to fly and eventually leave the roost. Female bats give birth to only one baby a year, which is called a pup. Except for a couple of species, male bats tend not to be found in maternity roosts. Bats can roost in trees, under bridges, in churches or older buildings, ruins or disused buildings, bat boxes or in attic spaces in homes. Bats tend to roost in locations that are close to a regular supply of food (i.e. insects).

Kuhl's pipstrelles in crevice. Photograph by Paul van Hoof.



WHAT DO IRISH BATS EAT?

Irish bats are insectivorous, meaning they eat insects and in an average night of feeding can eat approximately 3,000 insects. They play a very important role in keeping insect populations under control. Feeding happens during the night from dusk, which is when bats leave the roost and use defined flight paths, leading to sources of food. Hedgerows and treelines are essential commuting routes for bats to travel between roosting sites and preferred foraging habitats.

Daubenton's bat hunting. Photograph by Paul van Hoof.



HOW DO BATS NAVIGATE THEIR ENVIRONMENT?

Bats use echolocation to navigate their environment and seek out their prey. Echolocation is where a bat makes high pitched sounds which then bounce off solid objects in the environment. The bat can then gauge the distance by how quickly it takes for the echo to return. This is how bats understand how close they are to objects, including insects, enabling them to hunt and find their way around during the hours of darkness.

Daubenton's bat flying between ruins. Photograph by Paul van Hoof.



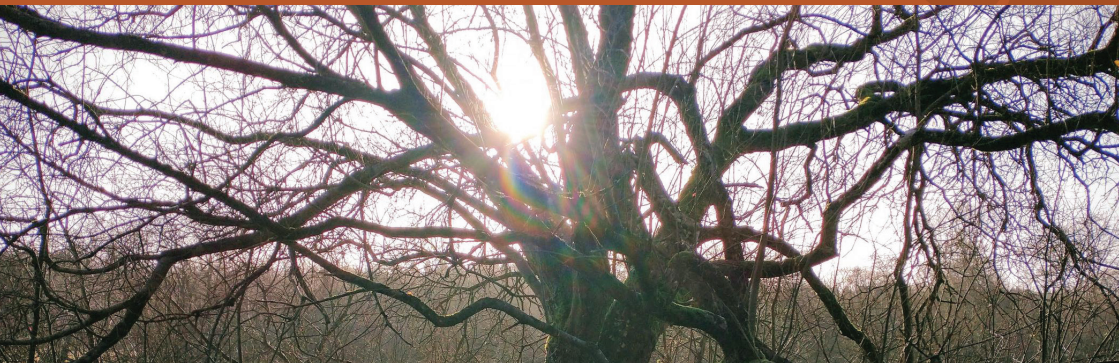
HOW MANY SPECIES OF BAT ARE PRESENT IN IRELAND?

Ireland has 9 resident species of bat, with an additional 2 vagrant species. The resident species are as follows:

- **Common pipistrelle**
- **Soprano pipistrelle**
- **Nathusius' pipistrelle**
- **Leisler's bat**
- **Brown long-eared bat**
- **Daubenton's bat**
- **Whiskered bat**
- **Natterer's bat**
- **Lesser horseshoe bat**

There are 2 vagrant species of bat, as follows:

- **Brandt's bat**
- **Greater horseshoe bat**



WHERE ARE BATS TO BE FOUND IN IRELAND?

Soprano pipistrelle and Common pipistrelle are the most common species and are distributed throughout Ireland. Most species of bat found in Ireland have been recorded throughout the country. The exception to this is the Lesser horseshoe bat, which is found mainly in Mayo, Galway, Clare, Limerick, Kerry and Cork, although there have been confirmed sightings of them in Sligo, Tipperary and Roscommon.

LEARN MORE

If you wish to learn more about our Irish bats and bats in general, please visit our website - **www.batconservationireland.org**, where we have lots of information about bats and the work that we do to help conserve these fascinating mammals. For our younger bat supporters, we have a website for children - **www.learnaboutbats.com** - which has lots of information and activities for children in the primary school age group.



BAT CONSERVATION
IRELAND

Bat Conservation Ireland

Registered Address:

Carmichael Centre,
4-7 North Brunswick Street,
Dublin 7

E-mail: admin@batconservationireland.org

Website: www.batconservationireland.org

Registered Number: 494343

Charity Number: 13016

Charity Registration Number: 20039417