



BAT CONSERVATION  
IRELAND

# WHY BATS MATTER



# 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 through mammary glands. 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 adults can sometimes be mistaken for babies. Their wingspan ranges from 20cm to 32cm, which can make them seem a lot bigger, when they are in flight.

**Lesser horseshoe bat.** Photograph by Paul van Hoof.



# WHAT DO IRISH BATS EAT & WHY DOES IT MATTER?

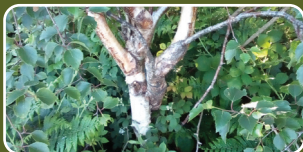
Irish bats are insectivorous, meaning they eat insects and in an average night of feeding can eat up to 3,000 insects. They play a very important role in keeping insect populations under control, which helps crop growers and farmers. Insects and pests can damage crops to the point that the crops become unusable. One way crop growers and farmers tackle this is to use pesticides. This can have a negative effect on the environment, as it can damage flora and fauna and negatively impact soil and water quality. Bats can play an important and helpful role for farmers and crop growers, by eating insects that cause damage to crops and keeping insect populations under control. For further information on how Bat Conservation Ireland is researching this, please visit: [\*\*www.batsandbugs.ie\*\*](http://www.batsandbugs.ie).

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



# WHAT ROLE DO BATS PLAY WITHIN OUR ECOSYSTEM?

As well as eating pesky insects, bats being present in an area is an indicator of a healthy environment. From our own bat monitoring programmes, surveys have shown that where water quality is poor, there is a reduction on Daubenton's bat populations by about 20%, compared to sites, where the water quality is good.<sup>1</sup> In other parts of the world, bats play an important role in pollination of particular plants, ensuring not only the plant's survival, but those who depend on it.



Left:  
**Bat detectors in situ.**





# ARE BATS UNDER THREAT FROM HUMAN ACTIVITY?

In Ireland, bats are protected species, which means that it is a criminal offence to kill, injure or disturb a bat or its resting place. Unfortunately, like much of our wildlife, bats are under threat from encroaching human activity and as a result, habitat loss. Particular areas of threat are from:

- **Hedgerow removal**
- **Increased light at night**
- **Climate change**
- **Increased use of pesticides**
- **Vulnerable to exclusion from their roosts in buildings and other man-made structures**
- **Increasing pollution of our waterways, rivers and lakes**

**Brown long-eared bats hibernating.** Photograph by Paul van Hoof.



# HOW CAN WE HELP BATS & HELP BIODIVERSITY?

There are lots of things we can do to help protect bats and encourage them in our environment:

- We can actively encourage bats in our environment, by planting hedgerows and bat friendly plants in our gardens (please see our information leaflets on these);
- We can reduce outdoor lighting and only use amber LED lights that are directed downward only (if necessary), which has less of an impact on bats. But no outdoor lighting is better for nocturnal wildlife, particularly near important habitats such as waterways and woodlands.
- We can take steps to reduce our carbon footprint – for some tips, please see [https://ec.europa.eu/clima/citizens/climate-tips\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/clima/citizens/climate-tips_en);
- We can actively stop using pesticides and other harmful chemicals in our gardens and environment;
- For anyone who has a bat roost in their attic, we would encourage you to read the information on our website, which will allay any fears you may have.

# LEARN MORE

If you wish to learn more about our Irish bats and bats in general, please visit our website - **[www.batconservationireland.org](http://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](http://www.learnaboutbats.com)** - which has lots of information and activities for children in the primary school age group. If you want to read about our Ecosystems Services Research Project, which we are carrying out with UCD, please visit - **[www.batsandbugs.ie](http://www.batsandbugs.ie)**.

**Common pipistrelle baby.** Photograph by Paul van Hoof.





## **Bat Conservation Ireland**

Registered Address:

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

E-mail: [admin@batconservationireland.org](mailto:admin@batconservationireland.org)

Website: [www.batconservationireland.org](http://www.batconservationireland.org)

Registered Number: 494343

Charity Number: 13016

Charity Registration Number: 20039417