

# Bat Conservation Trust



## PRESS RELEASE

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### **British bats are flying high!**

***A report published today by the Bat Conservation Trust (BCT) shows that five bat species are on the increase in the UK.***

Populations of greater and lesser horseshoe bats, Daubenton's bat, Natterer's bat and the common pipistrelle have risen steadily since regular monitoring began in 1997, the first evidence that some bat populations could be recovering from historic population declines. These are the latest findings of BCT's ongoing National Bat Monitoring Programme (NBMP), which is core-funded by the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC).

"A significant result for bat conservation and the UK's environment in general is that Daubenton's bats have been increasing at an estimated annual rate of 4.4% since 1997," said Dr Colin Catto, BCT's Director of Conservation & Monitoring. "Daubenton's bats feed mainly over open water, and their increase provides an excellent indicator that water quality is improving in the UK's rivers – a fact that is reflected by the Environment Agency's own statistics<sup>1</sup>. The findings are also particularly good news for both species of horseshoe bat, as they are among the most threatened mammals in the UK."

"These population increases reflect changing attitudes and conservation practices to bats and the environment in general. Bats and their roosting sites have now been legally protected for over twenty years, while agri-environment schemes are enhancing the countryside for the benefit of bats and other wildlife. The recent succession of mild winters is also likely to have contributed to the increases, as over-wintering survival is higher during warmer winters for bats."

"We are delighted that there is good news for some bat populations, as it reflects the enormous amount of effort that has gone into bat conservation and monitoring over the last decade," added Amy Coyte, Chief Executive of the Bat Conservation Trust. "An amazing 14,600 evenings have been spent monitoring bats since 1997, which goes to show that this ground-breaking project would not exist without the dedication of 1,500 volunteers."

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<sup>1</sup> In 2002, 95% of rivers were of good or fair quality, compared with 90% in 1990 (Environment Agency, [www.environment-agency.gov.uk](http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk)).

BCT is a member of the Tracking Mammals Partnership, which today publishes its first report, '*UK Mammals: Species Status and Population Trends*'. The report includes a summary of the results for these and other bat species, as well as population trends for other mammals, and is available to download from [www.trackingmammals.org](http://www.trackingmammals.org). The full NBMP Annual Report can be downloaded from [www.bats.org.uk](http://www.bats.org.uk).

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### Notes for Editors:

1. Requests for interview should be directed to Sarah Leggett on **020 7501 3635**, email [sleggett@bats.org.uk](mailto:sleggett@bats.org.uk). Bat images are also available, please ask for details.
2. The field survey data for the common pipistrelle shows a significant increase, but this is in conflict with the decline shown by the colony count data for this species. This illustrates the importance of long-term monitoring to ensure that comprehensive and reliable data is gathered.
3. The Bat Conservation Trust (BCT) is the only national organisation solely devoted to the conservation of bats and their habitats in the UK. Its network of 95 local bat groups and 1,000 bat workers survey roosts and hibernation sites, and work with householders, builders, farmers and foresters to protect bats. BCT operates the Bat Helpline on **0845 1300 228**, providing advice for all who come into contact with bats. More information can be found on the BCT's website, [www.bats.org.uk](http://www.bats.org.uk).
4. The National Bat Monitoring Programme was established in 1996, and aims to develop effective monitoring methods that will provide governmental and non-governmental organisations with accurate monitoring data on which to base advice relevant to the conservation needs of the UK's bats. In the long term, through the deployment of standard monitoring techniques and verification of existing methods, the programme aims to identify bat population changes and to suggest likely causes.
5. BCT is a member of the Tracking Mammals Partnership, a collaborative initiative involving 24 organisations with a variety of interests in UK mammals, which aims to improve the quality, quantity and dissemination of information on the status of mammal species in the UK. For more information visit [www.trackingmammals.org](http://www.trackingmammals.org).

### Bat Facts:

- There are sixteen bat species in the UK. The pipistrelle, the UK's smallest bat, has a wingspan of around 20-25cm and weighs just 4g; the largest, the noctule, has a wingspan of up to 40cm and weighs 40g.
- Like all mammals, bats are warm-blooded, give birth and suckle their young. They are very sociable animals, living together in colonies. They are long-lived (some can live for up to 30 years), are intelligent, highly mobile and more agile in flight than most birds.
- Bats fly and feed in the dark, which they are able to do by producing a stream of high-frequency calls and listening to the returning echoes which give a distinct 'sound picture' of the surroundings. This is called echolocation, and can only be heard by humans through use of a device called a bat detector.
- Bats in the UK eat only insects (such as midges, moths and mosquitoes), which they catch in flight or pick off water, foliage or the ground. The pipistrelle can eat up to 3,000 midges in one night – one-third of its body weight!
- Declining bat numbers have made it necessary to legally protect all UK bats and their roosts, whether they are in residence or not. This protection also makes it an offence to block their entrance and exit holes without seeking advice.