

# 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**

At least six bat species are known to breed in Richmond-upon-Thames. The two pipistrelles (Common and Soprano) are by far the most widespread, while the Noctule, Brown long-eared bat and Daubenton's bat are more localised but regularly recorded. Much rarer species include the Serotine, Nathusius' pipistrelle and Leisler's and Natterer's bats. 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). Some of the probable causes of this are summarised below.

### **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 (Natural Habitats & c.) Regulations*, 1994. 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* 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 English Nature 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, English Nature 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. Objectives, Actions and Targets

*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.*

### Objective 1: To raise awareness among key audiences, specifically planners, land managers and tree contractors

#### Target: Disseminate best practice advice by 2006

Action	Target Date	Lead	Other Partners
1.1 Promote best practice to all major tree surgery contractors using BCT's 'Bats In Trees' & other appropriate publications	2005	LA	BCT, LTOA, LBG
1.2 Maximise the roosting opportunities for prospecting bats by encouraging land managers and property owners to follow good practice guidelines	Ongoing	LA	LBG, TRP, BTCV, TW, Network Rail
1.3 Encourage appropriate foraging habitat management for bats across the Borough, for example by increasing grant scheme applications	Ongoing	LA	LBG, DEFRA, FC, TRP
1.4 Distribute and promote a Bat Advice Note to all Borough planners (Forward & Development Control) & key developers	2006	LA	BCT, GLA, EN, GLA, WLO
1.5 Distribute appropriate information to major roofing contractors & pest control companies	2005	LA	EN, LBG, BCT, Trade Associations

### Objective 2: To increase knowledge of bat distribution and population change

#### Target: Monitoring programme implemented by 2006

Action	Target Date	Lead	Other Partners
2.1 Maintain Borough participation in NBMP	Ongoing	BCT	LBG
2.2 Recruit and train 3 further surveyors for NBMP	2007	LBG	BCT
2.4 Contribute to database of records for all bats in London	Ongoing	LBG	GIGL, WWF, TRP, LNHS

**Objective 3: To protect and create new artificial roost sites in association with suitable feeding habitat**

**Target: Establish 8 new roosting opportunities by 2007**

Action	Target Date	Lead	Other Partners
3.1 Identify potential sites for roost creation opportunities	2005	LA	GLA, LBG
3.2 Create new roost opportunities on 8 identified sites	2007	LBG	LBR, WWT, BTCV, EA, Arcadia, TW, LWT, TRP, RYOT, Network Rail

**Objective 4: To increase public awareness and participation in bat conservation**

**Target: Encourage 30 Borough residents to become active members of London Bat Group by 2008**

Action	Target Date	Lead	Other Partners
4.1 Maintain co-ordinated programme of guided bat walks, attracting a total of at least 250 people per annum	Annually	LBG	LA, BCT, LWT, WWT, TRP
4.2 Maintain programme of event attendance, illustrated talks and popular written articles in local press	Annually	LA	LBG, LWT, WWT, Local Media
4.3 Run training courses in use of bat detectors	Biennially	WWT	LBG, BCT
4.4 Run training courses for potential leaders of bat walks	Biennially	LBG	LA

**Relevant Action Plans**

**Local Plans**

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

**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.

**National Plans**

Built Environment and Gardens; Pipistrelle bat.

**Key References**

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## Abbreviations

BCT - Bat Conservation Trust  
BTCV - British Trust for Conservation  
Volunteers  
EN - English Nature  
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  
NBMP - National Bat Monitoring Programme  
RYOT – Richmond Youth Offending Team  
TRP – The Royal Parks  
TW - Thames Water  
WLO - Wildlife Liaison Officer (Metropolitan  
Police)  
WWT - Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust

## Contact

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