

# BATS IN IRELAND



Whiskered Bat  
*Myotis mystacinus*



Nathusius Pipistrelle  
*Pipistrellus nathusii*



## WHAT IS A BAT?

Bats are mammals. This means that they have a covering of fur or hair on their bodies and give birth to live babies, which they suckle until they are independent. Bats are the only mammals capable of true flight.

All Ireland's bats are small – any of them fits neatly into the palm of a hand although bats appear larger when their wings are outstretched. The smallest species, pipistrelles, fit easily into a small matchbox.

There are nine species of bat found in Ireland. All nine species are protected under the Irish Wildlife Acts, and the EU's Habitats Directive and it is an offence to intentionally kill, disturb, handle, sell or offer for sale any bat, whether alive or dead, without a licence. However, it is permitted to tend a disabled or injured bat in order to release it when it recovers. National Parks and Wildlife Service must be notified about any proposed action to remove or disturb bat roosts, such as attic timber treatment and must be allowed time to advise on whether the action or operation should be carried out, the method to be used and its timing.

## BREEDING

A bat breeds just once a year and gives birth to a single baby usually in June or July. Each spring female bats choose warm, dry clean sites, which they will occupy until the young are independent and able to fly usually in August. These sites are called nursery roosts.

All Irish bats eat insects, which they catch in the air or take from branches of trees or even from the ground mostly between dusk and dawn. A wide range of insects is eaten, from tiny midges to large moths, beetles, caddis flies, daddy long-legs, earwigs and even spiders. Insect-eating bats play an important role in controlling the number of insects, some of which are crop pests.



Brown Long Eared Bat  
*Plecotus auritus*



Soprano Pipistrelle  
*Pipistrellus pygmaeus*



Leislars Bat  
*Nyctalus leisleri*

## WHAT CAN YOU DO TO HELP?

Irish bats need active conservation measures as they all face threats to their survival. The main threats are loss of roosting and feeding sites and general disturbance. Buildings are the favoured roost sites although bridges and trees are also used. This reliance on buildings makes bats vulnerable to renovation work, deliberate exclusion and toxic timber treatment chemicals. The practice of pumping liquid cement under pressure into cracks in bridges either kills bats directly or excludes them. The loss of cellars in old houses, blocking of mine entrances, destruction of souterrains and the cutting down of old trees all reduce the number of possible hibernation sites.

Bats need an abundant and varied insect life for at least seven months of the year. Therefore they forage in woodland, along hedgerows, over water and along waterside vegetation, in farmyards and also in urban and suburban gardens. Unfortunately, many examples of these habitats have been lost recently by removing hedgerows, silage making, spraying of pesticides, road and building development and drainage schemes.

Farmers and other land users can help bats by maintaining hedgerows, wetlands, and woodlands or reinstating such sites if these have been lost. Local authorities can save bridge roosting sites by leaving some crevices under bridges during repair works. Lost tree roosts can be replaced by erecting wooden bat boxes.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION VISIT [WWW.NPWS.IE](http://WWW.NPWS.IE) OR [WWW.BATCONSERVATIONIRELAND.ORG](http://WWW.BATCONSERVATIONIRELAND.ORG)**



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