



THE ECOLOGY EXPERTS

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Bat Surveys

All bat species are protected by UK and European legislation, making it an offence to intentionally or recklessly kill, injure, handle or capture a bat. It is also an offence to damage, destroy or obstruct any place that a bat uses for shelter or protection (referred to as a roost). Roosts are protected all year round, whether they are active at the time or not (for example, a summer maternity roost location is protected during the winter months when bats have moved to their hibernation site).

What kind of survey do I need?

The term “bat survey” can be used to describe two types of survey – a Bat Risk Assessment or a Bat Activity Survey. A description of these surveys is given below for your information.

Bat Risk Assessment

Any building, structure or mature tree that is due to be impacted as part of a development or construction activities should be assessed for its potential to support roosting bats, in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework. This type of survey is sometimes referred to as a scoping survey, and we would complete this as part of a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal or as a standalone survey when required. Bat Risk Assessments are conducted during daytime hours and can be completed at any point in the year – providing that weather conditions are suitable – and are usually required as part of a planning application to determine the potential impact, or lack of impact to bats.

Bat Risk Assessments completed by Naturally Wild follow the latest Bat Conservation Trust (BCT) guidelines and seek to grade buildings, structures and trees into categories of suitability for supporting roosting bats. From this categorisation system, the requirement and level of further survey effort can be determined.

Bat Activity Surveys for Structures (Buildings & Trees)

Once a Bat Risk Assessment has been completed for a building, structure or tree; the requirement to undertake Bat Activity Surveys may have been identified. Activity surveys are usually required if signs of bat presence indicating a roost were recorded during the risk/ scoping assessment (such as droppings), a roost is confirmed (i.e. bats observed) or the building is considered to hold value for supporting a roost (such as containing gaps under tiles and fascia boards). The activity surveys are used to confirm the presence of a bat roost within a building, structure or tree and to also estimate the number and species of bat(s) that may be using a roost.

Between one and three surveys are completed depending on the risk of the target structure, which can be completed between May and September and are conducted at dusk and dawn. These involve surveyors positioned at suitable vantage points around the building with bat detectors (detect the bats echolocation) to observe bats emerging (dusk) and/ or re-entering (dawn) the roost.

The Naturally Wild team are experienced in activity surveying and hold the appropriate licences required to survey and legally disturb bats. Our surveys are completed in line with the latest Bat Conservation Trust and Natural England guidelines.

Naturally Wild are here to help if you require Bat Activity Surveys at your site or property, even if we did not complete the initial ecological assessment or Bat Risk Assessment.

See information below on the next steps if bats are recorded roosting within the structure. For further information on what to expect from a bat surveys, please click here to view CIEEM's* guidance for home owners.

Bat Activity Surveys for Habitats

Activity surveys are also used to determine the level of bat activity within and around a site, usually conducted on larger developments that may impact on habitats that are of value to foraging and commuting bats; such as hedgerows, tree lines and woodland.

These surveys are usually described as transect surveys and involve surveyors walking select routes around the site to record the level of bat activity; including species, number of bats and activity. These surveys then provide an indication of the value of the habitat and whether protection, mitigation and/ or compensation are required.

Roosting bats – the next steps

If survey effort has shown that bats are roosting in a building, structure or tree that will be impacted by a development, a European Protected Species (EPS) mitigation licence will be required from Natural England. An EPS licence application is usually prepared by an ecologist and includes a Method Statement, which demonstrates how the proposed works will be conducted to avoid harm to bats (mitigation).

The EPS licence will also summarise any compensation measures that are required in order to maintain roosting value for bats upon completion of the development. Our team have completed a range of EPS licences and have successfully obtained licences for most species of bat found in the UK. Please feel free to get in contact to discuss further, we are happy to provide free advice and guidance.

Useful Links

- [Bats: protection and licences. Natural England](#)
- [Bat Conservation Trust website](#)

* Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management