

# BECHSTEIN'S BAT

*Myotis bechsteinii*

Hampshire Biodiversity Partnership

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

Bechstein's bat is considered to be rare both in the UK and throughout its range<sup>1</sup>. It has been identified by the UK Biodiversity Steering Group as a species that requires conservation action and is included in the 'priority' list of the UK Biodiversity Action Plan. A UK species action plan for Bechstein's bat was published in volume 1 (page 39) of the UK Biodiversity Group Tranche 2 Action Plans.

The Hampshire Biodiversity Partnership has identified Bechstein's bat as a species requiring urgent action in Hampshire.

## 2 CURRENT STATUS

### 2.1 Ecology and Habitat Requirements

Bechstein's bat is a very rare tree dwelling bat, mostly associated with mature and veteran trees, usually in broadleaved woodland. A few individuals are found in underground sites during hibernation, but most roost in trees all year. The bat feeds on invertebrates, including spiders and resting day-flying insects, which are picked from branches and leaves. Maternity roosts are small, ranging from a few to about 30 individuals.

### 2.2 Population and Distribution

This species is considered rare in the UK, with only 140 records since 1800. Nationally it occupies a restricted distribution across the south of England, with population centres in Devon, Dorset, Gloucestershire, Hampshire, Isle of Wight, Somerset and Wiltshire. There have been two recent records from Wales and the identification of several roosts in Surrey in 1997.

Only one maternity roost and less than 20 hibernation roosts are currently known in the UK with almost all records being of isolated individuals. The most recent population estimates are of around 1500 individuals with overall population trends unknown. Bechstein's bat is widespread but rare throughout continental Europe.

### 2.3 Important Sites

In Hampshire there are 12 records of Bechstein's bat: the first record dates from before 1837 and the most recent is of a maternity roost found in 1996. The majority of records are of single individuals found in the New Forest Natural Area.

### 2.4 Protection

Bechstein's bat is listed on Appendix II of the Bonn Convention (and its agreement on the Conservation of Bats in Europe, 1994), Appendix II of the Bern Convention, and Annexes II and IV of the EC Habitats and Species Directive. It is protected under Schedules 5 and 6 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. The 1996 IUCN Red List of Threatened Animals classifies this species as Vulnerable.

In Hampshire the only known maternity roost is found in the New Forest Candidate Special Area of Conservation (cSAC) and Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).

## 3 CURRENT FACTORS AFFECTING BECHSTEIN'S BAT

Threats to this species are poorly understood. Its low population density, exacting habitat requirements and low rates of reproduction make Bechstein's bat particularly vulnerable to the following factors:

- Loss and fragmentation of open ancient deciduous woodland habitat.
- Loss, destruction and disturbance of roosts or potential roosts, particularly in old trees.

## 4 CURRENT ACTION

### 4.1 National

- A review of all records has been undertaken and funded by English Nature's Species Recovery Programme (SRP). The species is also included in the UK National Bat Monitoring Programme (NBMP), which aims to establish baseline data for the

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species and propose a long-term monitoring strategy.

- A network of local voluntary bat groups has been established, working closely with the staff of statutory nature conservation organisations. The volunteers are routinely consulted over actions which may be a threat to bats, and other issues relating to Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.
- Some hibernation sites have been as the grilling of entrances to caves. Some of these sites are located within SSSIs.
- English Nature's SRP includes an initiative to provide bat boxes in Dorset and Wiltshire in woodlands where roost sites are limited. These are also used for monitoring purposes.

4.2 Local

- The Hampshire Bat Group (HBG) and English Nature local team have assisted with the review of records of Bechstein's bat in Hampshire, and are currently working with

the NBMP to gather local data on this species.

- The Hampshire bat group also works closely with EN on other bat issues in Hampshire. Training and support for the bat group is co-ordinated by EN.
- A management plan for the New Forest cSAC is currently underway, funded by the EU LIFE initiative. This should bring benefits for Bechstein's bat whose only known maternity roost in Hampshire lies within the New Forest cSAC boundary.
- EN's SRP has funded the erection of 50 bat boxes near the maternity roost in the New Forest. The project is being co-ordinated by EN's local team with assistance from the Hampshire Bat Group and Forestry Commission. Vincent Wildlife Trust has erected additional bat boxes at two other localities within the New Forest Natural Area.

**5 OBJECTIVES**

The overall aim of this Plan is to protect and increase the distribution and population of Bechstein's bat in Hampshire. This broad aim translates into the specific objectives set out below. Where feasible, objectives have been allocated targets against which achievement can be measured. The 'Proposed Action' table in section 6 identifies the action to be taken to meet these objectives.

	<b>OBJECTIVES</b>	<b>PROPOSED ACTIONS</b>
<b>A</b>	Identify and maintain all roosts associated with Bechstein's bat in Hampshire. Maintain the existing population of Bechstein's bat through the protection of roost sites and feeding areas.	<b>1-12, 16-20</b>
<b>B</b>	Enhance the present and potential size and range of the Bechstein's bat population in Hampshire.	<b>1, 3-6, 16-20</b>
<b>C</b>	Improve knowledge and understanding of Bechstein's bat requirements through research. Develop and implement regular monitoring.	<b>3, 7-13</b>
<b>D</b>	Promote communication, education and awareness of the status and needs of Bechstein's bat.	<b>4, 5, 12-22</b>

## 6 PROPOSED ACTION

The following table lists the actions required to achieve the objectives set out in this Plan. Each action has been assigned to one or more 'Key Partners'. Key Partners are those organisations that are expected to take responsibility for the delivery of the actions assigned to them, according to the targets set in this Plan. Other organisations may also be involved in the delivery of action, and they have been indicated in the 'Others' column.

Key to symbols in Action Table:	
◆	To be completed by the indicated year. Work can commence at any time before the due date, at the discretion of the Key Partner.
◆⇄	Design or production of a plan/strategy to be completed by this year and then followed by its implementation.
➔	To start by the indicated year and usually followed by ongoing work. A start arrow in year 2000 can indicate a new action or a new impetus to existing work.
⇄	Work that has already begun and is ongoing.

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	ACTION	DELIVERY BY		YEAR						MEETS OBJ.
		Key Partner	Others	◆=complete by ➔=start by	◆⇄=design by and implement ⇄=ongoing	2000	2001	2002	2003	
<b>Site and Species Policy and Protection</b>										
1	Endeavour to take account of the conservation requirements of this species when reviewing and adjusting agri-environment schemes.	FC, MAFF/ FRCA	FWAG, EN, HWT	⇄	⇄	⇄	⇄	⇄	⇄	A,B
2	Ensure the long-term protection of known roosts and suitable roosting and feeding habitats surrounding these sites	EN, FC	HBG, HWT, VWT, LAs		◆					A
<b>Site and Species Management</b>										
3	Install 100 bat boxes in known population areas and in areas of former records (where appropriate habitat still exists) and monitor their use.	EN, FC, VWT, HBG, WLO	HWT, BCT		◆⇄					A, B, C
4	Encourage sympathetic management of land adjacent to known breeding roost sites to benefit foraging bats.	EN, FRCA, FC	HWT, BCT	⇄	⇄	⇄	⇄	⇄	⇄	A, B, D
5	Seek to encourage landowners to take up beneficial land management schemes for bats (Woodland Grant Scheme, ESA, Countryside Stewardship).	MAFF/ FRCA, FC,	FWAG, HWT, HMAP				◆			A, B, D

6	Ensure that the needs of Bechstein's bat are taken into account in the production and implementation of the New Forest cSAC Management Plan.	EN, FC	HBBG	◆⇄							A, B
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	ACTION	DELIVERY BY		YEAR						MEETS OBJ.	
		Key Partner	Others	◆=complete by ▶=start by	◆⇄=design by and implement ⇄=ongoing	2000	2001	2002	2003		2004
<b>Research, Survey and Monitoring</b>											
7	Continue to search for all roost types of this species.	EN, HBG, FC, VWT	HWT, WLO, HBBG	⇄	⇄	⇄	⇄	⇄	⇄	⇄	A,C
8	Undertake mist netting/radio-tracking in likely foraging areas to locate roosts.	EN	HBG, SCH			◆					A,C
9	Follow up new discoveries of this species with immediate roost location procedures.	EN, HBG, VWT	FC, HBBG, BCT	⇄	⇄	⇄	⇄	⇄	⇄	⇄	A,C
10	On locating roosts, undertake radio-tracking to identify other roosts in the vicinity and important foraging areas. Establish monitoring protocols for these sites.	EN, HBG, VWT	BCT, SU	⇄	⇄	⇄	⇄	⇄	⇄	⇄	A,C
11	Collect droppings from roosts to determine favoured prey items.	EN, HBG	HMR, FC, SCH, BCT	⇄	⇄	⇄	⇄	⇄	⇄	⇄	A,C
12	Develop and maintain a database for the collation of Bechstein's bat records in Hampshire.	HMR, HBR/HCC	HBBG, EN, HBG	◆							A, C, D
13	Ensure records are fed into relevant national and local biological databases.	EN, HMR	HBG, HWT, HCC	⇄	⇄	⇄	⇄	⇄	⇄	⇄	C, D
<b>Communication, Awareness and Promotion</b>											
14	Maintain links with the national Bechstein's bat BAP Group and other county/regional bat BAPs.	EN, HBG	HBBG, BCT	⇄	⇄	⇄	⇄	⇄	⇄	⇄	D
15	Use the conservation requirements of Bechstein's bat to illustrate the importance of native deciduous woodland and veteran trees.	EN, HWT, FC	HBG, FA	⇄	⇄	⇄	⇄	⇄	⇄	⇄	D
16	Ensure the needs of Bechstein's bat are considered in relevant HAPs/SAPs, including deciduous woodland and chalk rivers, and in particular, wet woodlands, wood pasture and parkland.	HCC, EN, HWT, EA	HBP,HBBG	◆							A, B,D
17	Advise project officers for relevant agri-environment schemes and woodland /forestry grant schemes of the location of key roost sites, their importance, and	EN, HBG, HMR	FC, MAFF/FRCA HCC, HWT,				◆				A, B,D

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	appropriate management for surrounding areas.		FWAG, HMAP							
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18	Give tree surgeons, tree wardens and foresters operating in the vicinity of Bechstein's bat sites, advice on tree management practices which will assist in the conservation of the species.	EN, HBG	BCT, FC, HWT	↔	↔	↔	↔	↔	↔	A, B, D
19	Continue to support the network that provides bat conservation advice, including the use of licensed bat workers/ wardens for roost visits.	EN, HBG, HWT	BCT	↔	↔	↔	↔	↔	↔	A, B, D
20	Give advice to landowners in the vicinity of roosts on the favourable habitat management of woodlands and riparian habitats for this species.	EN, HBG, HWT	FC, MAFF/FRCA FWAG, HMAP	↔	↔	↔	↔	↔	↔	A, B, D
21	Recruit and train to maintain a level of three licensed bat workers per local authority area.	EN, HBG	BCT, HWT	↔	↔	↔	↔	↔	↔	D
22	Ensure that 50% of 'Police Wildlife Liaison Officers' receive training relating to bats.	EN, HBG	BCT		◆					D

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**KEY TO ORGANISATIONS**

BCT Bat Conservation Trust  
 EN English Nature  
 FA Forestry Authority  
 FC Forestry Commission  
 FRCA Farming and Rural Conservation Association  
 FWAG Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group  
 HBBG Hampshire Bechstein's Bat Working Group  
 HBG Hampshire Bat Group

HCC Hampshire County Council  
 HMR Hampshire Mammal Recorder  
 HWT Hampshire Wildlife Trust  
 MAFF Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food  
 SCH Sparsholt College Hampshire  
 SU Southampton University  
 VWT Vincent Wildlife Trust  
 WLO Wildlife Liaison Officer (Police)

## REFERENCES

- 1 ***A Review of British Mammals: Population Estimates and Conservation Status of British Mammals Other Than Cetaceans***, S Harris et al., JNCC, Peterborough, 1995.

## SPECIES ACTION PLAN

This is one of many Habitat, Species and Topic Action Plans being prepared by the Hampshire Biodiversity Partnership. It will be monitored by the Partnership and fully reviewed in 2004.

This species action plan has been prepared by Ian Davidson-Watts and the Bechstein's Bat SAP Working Group on behalf of the Hampshire Biodiversity Partnership.

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