

BARBASTELLE BAT

Barbastella barbastellus

Hampshire Biodiversity Partnership

1 INTRODUCTION

The barbastelle bat is considered to be rare both in the UK¹ and throughout its range. The barbastelle bat has been identified by the UK Biodiversity steering group report as a species that requires conservation action and is listed on the priority list of the UK Biodiversity Action Plan. Due to its occurrence in Hampshire, the Hampshire Biodiversity Partnership has identified this bat as a species requiring action in Hampshire.

2 CURRENT STATUS

2.1 Ecology and Habitat Requirements

The barbastelle bat is primarily a woodland species. It will use hollow and storm damaged trees for summer roosts and for hibernation. Old buildings, such as churches, timber framed barns and underground structures such as railway tunnels and stone mines are also used for roosting. Little is currently known about foraging habits of this species, although recent research in Sussex has shown that they will often travel up to 20km away to forage using hedgerows and riparian corridors as flight lines. They specialise on moths as prey items (Greenaway Pers Comm. 1999).

2.2 Population and Distribution

This species is considered rare in the UK with 340 records since 1802. Nationally this species is widely distributed in England and Wales, with centres of population in southwest and mid-west England, West Sussex and Norfolk. In the UK less than five breeding roosts are currently known and less than 30 hibernation sites. The most recent population estimates are of around 5000 individuals with overall population trends unknown. The barbastelle bat is widespread but rare throughout continental Europe.

In Hampshire there are 17 records for this species dating back to 1900, with most records being confined to the New Forest and northeast Hampshire. Research being undertaken in West Sussex has indicated that there may be populations of this species in East Hampshire, and there has also been a recent record from the Andover area.

2.3 Important Sites

In Hampshire there is only one known maternity roost. It is near Mottisfont on the River Test. However, most recent records for the species are from the New Forest.

2.4 Protection

This 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* (VU A2c).

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3 CURRENT FACTORS AFFECTING BARBASTELLE BATS

Threats to this species are poorly understood, but its low population density, exacting habitat requirements and low rates of reproduction make this species particularly vulnerable to the following factors:

- Further loss and fragmentation of open ancient deciduous woodland habitat.
- Loss, destruction and disturbance of roosts or potential roosts in buildings, trees and underground sites.
- A reduction in numbers of insect prey due to habitat simplification acting through factors such as fertiliser use and intensive grazing regimes.

4 CURRENT ACTION

4.1 National

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

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- A network of local voluntary bat groups working closely with SNCO staff is established. These 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 known hibernation sites have been physically protected against disturbance. (e.g. grilling of entrances to caves), some of these sites are within SSSI's.
- Research is being carried out in Norfolk, Devon and West Sussex, with the aim of locating roosts and identifying habitat requirements of the barbastelle bat.

in Hampshire.

- The Hampshire bat group works closely with EN to deal with bat issues in Hampshire. Training and support for the bat wardens and potential bat workers is co-ordinated by EN.
- The two most recent records of this species are from the New Forest, which has legislative protection as a SSSI/cSAC/SPA and RAMSAR site. Conservation Objectives for the New Forest include the sensitive management of old trees for wildlife.
- Plans have been prepared to undertake research work to locate barbastelle bat roosts in Hampshire by extending the work from West Sussex. Identified research areas include East Hampshire, Test Valley and the New Forest.

4.2 Local

- The Hampshire bat group and the English Nature Local Team have assisted in the review of records and are currently working with the NBMP to gather data on this species

5 OBJECTIVES

The overall aim of this Plan is to protect and increase the distribution and population of barbastelle bats 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.

	OBJECTIVES	PROPOSED ACTIONS
A	Maintain existing populations and known roosts of barbastelle bats in Hampshire. Ensure no further loss or fragmentation.	1 – 5, 7, 8
B	Enhance the status of barbastelle bats in Hampshire. Enhance the suitability of potential roosts currently unoccupied by barbastelle bats, to increase distribution of populations.	1 – 12, 15
C	Establish and maintain a comprehensive understanding of barbastelle bat distribution, status and ecological requirements within Hampshire through appropriate research, surveying and monitoring.	9 - 13
D	Promote communication, education and awareness of the status and needs of the barbastelle bat.	4, 5, 7, 8, 12 - 15

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.

	ACTION	DELIVERY BY		YEAR						MEETS OBJ.	
		Key Partner	Others	◆ = complete by	◆⇄ = design by and implement	➡ = start by	⇄ = ongoing	2000	2001		2002
Site and Species Policy and Protection											
1	Ensure that consideration is given to habitat surrounding key bat sites when developing local development plans and assessing planning applications.	LA's, EN	HWT, HBG	⇄	⇄	⇄	⇄	⇄	⇄	⇄	A, B
2	Ensure that the requirements of this species are considered during the development of Local Environment Agency Plans.	EA, EN	HWT, HBG	⇄	⇄	⇄	⇄	⇄	⇄	⇄	A, B
3	Ensure the long term protection of known roosts and suitable roosting and feeding habitat surrounding these sites, notify such areas as SSSIs if required.	HWT, HCC, DCs, EN	LO, FC, FA	⇄	⇄	⇄	⇄	⇄	⇄	⇄	A, B
Site and Species Management											
4	Advise relevant project officers for countryside stewardship, the woodland grant scheme and other agri-environment and forestry schemes of the location of key roost sites, their importance and appropriate management for the surrounding areas.	EN, HBG	FC, MAFF, HCC, HWT, FWAG	➡							A, B, D
5	Advise tree surgeons, tree wardens and foresters operating in the vicinity of barbastelle bat sites on tree management that will assist in the conservation of the species.	EN, HBG	BCT, FC, HWT	⇄	⇄	⇄	⇄	⇄	⇄	⇄	A, B, D

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	ACTION	DELIVERY BY		YEAR						MEETS OBJ.
		Key Partner	Others	◆ = complete by	◆⇄ = design by and implement	⇄ = ongoing	⇄ = ongoing	⇄ = ongoing	⇄ = ongoing	
				2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2010	
6	Encourage the provision of the requirements of this bat in old buildings	EN	HCC, HBG,	⇄	⇄	⇄	⇄	⇄	⇄	B
7	Continue to support the current network providing bat conservation advice, including the use of licensed bat workers/wardens for roost visits	EN, HBG	HWT	⇄	⇄	⇄	⇄	⇄		A, B, D
8	Advise landowners in the vicinity of roosts on the favourable habitat management of woodlands and riparian habitats for the species.	EN, HBG, HWT	FC, MAFF, FWAG	⇄	⇄	⇄	⇄	⇄	⇄	A, B, D
Research, Survey and Monitoring										
9	Undertake mist netting/radiotracking in likely foraging areas to locate roosts.	EN	HBG	⇄	⇄	⇄	⇄	⇄	⇄	B, C
10	Follow up discoveries of this species, with immediate roost location procedures.	EN, HBG	FC, HBBG, BCT	⇄	⇄	⇄	⇄	⇄	⇄	B, C
11	On locating roosts undertake radiotracking to identify other roosts in the vicinity and important foraging areas. Establish monitoring protocols for these sites and facilitate research into habitat requirements.	EN	HBG, BCT	⇄	⇄	⇄	⇄	⇄	⇄	B, C
12	Develop a county database for bat records	HMR	HBBG, EN, HBG	➔						B, C, D
Communication, Awareness and Promotion										
13	Maintain links with the National Barbastelle Bat Group and other county/regional bat BAPs.	EN	HBBG, BCT	⇄	⇄	⇄	⇄	⇄	⇄	C, D
14	Use the conservation requirements of the barbastelle bat to illustrate the importance of landscape habitats and in particular wildlife corridors.	EN, HWT, FC	HBG, FA	⇄	⇄	⇄	⇄	⇄	⇄	D
15	Consider this plan in conjunction with plans for deciduous woodland and chalk rivers, in particular wet woodlands, wood pastures and parkland.	HCC, EN, HWT, EA	HBBG	➔						B, D
16	Raise awareness of this species through leaflets and other media	BCT, HBG	HWT							D

		HBG			➡					
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KEY TO ORGANISATIONS:

BCT Bat Conservation Trust
 EA Environment Agency
 EN English Nature
 FA Forestry Authority
 FC Forestry Commission
 MAFF Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food
 FWAG Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group
 HBBG Hampshire Biodiversity Bat Group

HBG Hampshire Bat Group
 HCC Hampshire County Council
 HMR Hampshire Mammal Recorder
 HWT Hampshire Wildlife Trust
 LAs Local Authorities
 LO Landowners



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 and updated in 2005.

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

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