

Bats in flight

If you are lucky, or know where to look, you might have seen at least one of the UK's 18 species of bats shooting through the sky between dusk and dawn. They feed largely on the wing, specially adapted to take advantage of nocturnal insects in the night sky. Telling the different species apart by sight can be difficult, but this guide outlines key details to look out for to identify five of our most common species, including echolocation calls (high-pitched sounds that bats use to navigate and hunt) for those with access to a bat detector.

Common / Soprano Pipistrelle

Pipistrellus pipistrellus / *Pipistrellus pygmaeus*

Wingspan: 190-235 mm

Our smallest, most common, and widespread bats; until recently considered the same species. They feed mainly on flies in a wide range of habitats, including urban and suburban environments. Summer roosts are often in cracks and crevices around the outside of buildings. They emerge from their roosts around 20 minutes after sunset.

Echolocation: Often the only way to tell the species apart from a distance: Common Pipistrelle calls are clearest at 45 kHz, Soprano Pipistrelles at 55 kHz.



flight is fast and agile, between 2-10 m above the ground



Brown Long-eared Bat

Plecotus auritus

Wingspan: 230-285 mm

Highly distinctive medium sized species, with broad wings, and ears nearly as long as the body. They emerge an hour after sunset. Prey is often caught in flight, but occasionally taken from the ground or 'gleaned' from a tree. Forms small colonies, roosting in the rafters of older buildings, churches and trees.

Echolocation: Very quiet series of clicks between 25-50 kHz; clearest at 35 kHz.



slow, agile, hovering flight



Grey shape (right) shows actual wingspan of a Common Pipistrelle. The white bat in each box show Common Pipistrelle at same scale for size comparison.



Daubenton's Bat

Myotis daubentonii



Wingspan: 240-275 mm

a fast steady flight, often very close to the water surface

Medium sized bat closely associated with waterways, where they feed on flies (e.g. midges and caddisflies) close to the water, occasionally taking prey from the water surface using their feet or tail membrane as a scoop. They emerge over an hour after sunset. Summer roosts are often underground sites near water.



Echolocation: A machine gun like burst of clicks between 35-85 kHz; clearest at 45-50 kHz

Noctule Bat

Nyctalus noctula



Wingspan: 320-400 mm

flies high and fast in the open, with repeated steep dives

One of the largest UK bats, with narrow pointed wings. Dives steeply at great speeds to catch prey, including large beetles. Usually one of the first bats to emerge, sometimes before sunset. Roosts almost always within holes in trees, and rarely in buildings.



Echolocation: A characteristic 'chip chop' between 20-45 kHz; clearest at 35 kHz.

Find bat hotspots and share your sightings at www.bigbatmap.org

Bats are under threat in the UK, largely due to loss of suitable habitat for roosting and foraging, and are protected by UK and EU law. To find out more about UK bats, visit www.bats.org.uk.

To report the discovery of a grounded or injured bat, or a bat roost under threat, contact the **Bat Conservation Trust** via the National Bat Helpline on 0845 1300 228.

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