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This email has been sent to bat group contacts only.  
Please forward this information to others in your group.

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Dear Bat Groups,

Thank you to everyone who has been in touch asking for advice about surveys and other bat group activities now that COVID-19 restrictions are being eased further. There continue to be some differences between the devolved administrations and it remains important that that everyone follows the relevant Government guidance for the part of the British Islands in which they are based.

In response to recent questions from groups, especially relating to human-bat transmission of SARS-CoV-2, we have prepared this special edition bulletin about bat group activities and COVID-19:

1. Bat Group Activities Not Involving Handling of Bats
2. Bat Group Activities Involving Handling of Bats
3. Bat Rehabilitation Activities
4. Bat Group Insurance
5. COVID-19 & Bats FAQs

If you have any questions about COVID-19 and bat group activities, or the information that BCT is providing around COVID-19 and bats to support bat groups, please do get in touch (email [cmorris@bats.org.uk](mailto:cmorris@bats.org.uk)).

### **1. Bat Group Activities Not Involving Handling of Bats**

The Government guidance focuses on human health and the priority should always be the health and well-being of bat group members (as well as their families and members of the public). If you have activities that do not involve handling bats, and which can be undertaken in line with the relevant Government guidance around social distancing, travel, etc., then it is absolutely fine for these to go ahead. As these challenging times continue, the health and well-being of BCT's staff, volunteers and everyone we work with remains our priority too. You can find out more information about how BCT's operations are affected by COVID-19 on our website at: <https://www.bats.org.uk/the-trust/covid19>. You should not feel that you have to carry out activities this year if you have any concerns about the health and safety of yourself or other people in your group.

### **2. Bat Group Activities Involving Handling of Bats**

As a bat conservation charity, we don't just have a focus on the health of our staff, volunteers and the other people we work with but also the health of our bat populations. The IUCN Bat Specialist Group (BSG) convened a global panel of experts (including bat ecologists and virologists) to consider the risk of human to bat transmission of SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19. The IUCN BSG has stated "It is the opinion of the panel that there is a credible risk of human-to-bat transmission of SARS CoV-2, but this risk can be reduced using appropriate mitigation strategies." The IUCN Bat Specialist Group recommendations can be found online at: <https://www.iucnbsg.org/> and we shared details in the [June Bat Group Bulletin](#).

In accordance with the IUCN recommendations, with the exception of bat rehabilitation (see below), any bat group activities that involve handling bats should be postponed unless it is essential that those activities take place this year and cannot be delayed until more evidence around risks to bats is available.

Since their recommendations were released on 19<sup>th</sup> June, the IUCN BSG has published a very helpful Minimise, Assess and Protect (MAP) decision tree flow chart. We have added this to the IUCN [news item on our website](#) and it is also attached to this email as a PDF. We recommend that any bat groups refer to this decision tree when considering if it is essential that activities go ahead.

At BCT we have considered our own research projects that involve direct contact with bats and decided it is not essential they go ahead this year. We have therefore postponed field work for the National Nathusius' Pipistrelle Project until next year, as well as other research projects that include trapping that we are involved with and our Advanced Bat Skills Training courses.

The COVID-19 pandemic is a dynamic situation with new information becoming available on an almost daily basis. We will continue to consider recommendations from the IUCN BSG, relevant Government Agencies and other advisors to keep our information as up to date as is reasonably possible.

### **3. Bat Rehabilitation Activities**

Bat rehabilitation activities have continued during the COVID-19 pandemic. BCT issued guidance for managing disease risks from the perspectives of both human and bat health: 'COVID-19 Good Practice Guidelines for Bat Rehabilitators: Managing Disease Risk'. This provides important information for bat carers. (It does not replace the existing guidance on rabies risk management.) This can be found on the BCT website at: <https://www.bats.org.uk/resources/resources-for-bat-groups/useful-links-documents> and has been updated once, with a further update due for the end of July (we will highlight within the document what has changed but advice will remain around wearing face coverings, gloves, etc.)

### **4. Bat Group Insurance**

If you rely on BCT insurance for third party liability cover for your bat group activities, then so long as the relevant Government advice is followed, your risk assessments are extended to include the COVID-19 risks (for human and bat health), and you are following BCT guidance, you will be covered as usual (and of course you are completing risk assessments and meet the other requirements for the insurance). Please see: <https://www.bats.org.uk/resources/resources-for-bat-groups/insurance-cover-for-bat-groups> for more details about insurance cover through BCT.

### **5. COVID-19 & Bats Frequently Asked Questions**

We just wanted to remind you that we have a set of frequently asked questions (FAQs) on our website about COVID-19 and bats at: <https://www.bats.org.uk/about-bats/bats-and-disease/covid-19-and-bats>. We have added in new questions and answers since the page was first created in April and as new information has become available. They are due an update again. Please do get in touch if you have any additional questions that you would like to see added. Do please share the link in your own bat group communications and on social media.

Best wishes,



Colin.

If you wish to alter your contact preferences, including to opt-out of receiving future communications from us, please contact me by either calling 020 7820 7193 or emailing [cmorris@bats.org.uk](mailto:cmorris@bats.org.uk) (if you are receiving this Special Edition Bulletin forwarded to you by your bat group contact, please contact the bat group directly rather than emailing me).

**Colin Morris**

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Direct line: 020 7820 7193

National Bat Helpline: 0345 1300 228 (hours of service are 09.30 to 16.30, Monday to Friday)

**There are dedicated Bat Group pages on the BCT website at:**

<https://www.bats.org.uk/resources/resources-for-bat-groups>

Find us on: [www.bats.org.uk](http://www.bats.org.uk) | [Facebook](#) | [Twitter](#) | [Instagram](#)

Get involved and help BCT conserve the UK's bats and their habitats by [joining BCT as a member](#), or remember us by [leaving a gift in your Will](#).

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