



Bats in living areas

This leaflet is designed for those who have discovered a bat or bats in their living areas. If you require further information after reading this leaflet, please contact the Bat Conservation Trust (BCT).

Where did the bat(s) come from?

There may be a bat roost either at your property or in the near vicinity. Bats are at their most active during the summer months and particularly if they are young bats, they may start to explore their immediate environment. Unfortunately sometimes they may find their way through small gaps and become lost in areas away from their roost. This problem is unlikely to last very long as they soon learn to fly.

Sometimes, bats may mistakenly fly through open windows, particularly those that are hinged at the top. This may be an isolated incident, with no evidence that there is a roost, but usually the bat(s) will have come from a nearby colony.

Internally within the building there may be small gaps allowing the bat(s) to enter the living areas from a roosting site.

What do I do if a bat is flying inside one of my rooms?

A bat flying in a room is looking for a way out. We advise that you enclose the bat into one single room with a window or door to the outside if possible. If it is dark outside, remove any clutter from the room and open the windows and/or external doors as widely as possible, dim or turn off the lights and let it find its own way out. Bats navigate by sending out high-pitched sounds and listening for the echoes so the bat should soon detect any opening that leads out of the room. You may wish to stand outside or search the room to be sure that the bat escaped safely.

- **A flying bat should NOT be released outside if:**
 - **it is during daylight hours**
 - **an injury can be seen**
 - **a cat has brought the bat in**
 - **it is between 1st November & 31st March or the weather conditions are not suitable (storms/high winds/temperatures below 5°C)**

Instead allow the bat to land safely and follow the containment advice below or contact the National Bat Helpline on 0345 1300 228.

- **NEVER try to catch a flying bat** as this is almost impossible and you are likely to injure it severely.

What do I do if a bat has landed or is crawling?

Sometimes bats, particularly young ones which are inexperienced flyers will become exhausted before finding their way out. They may try to land on a wall or curtains, or they may crash land on furniture or the floor. If the bat has been seen flying but has now landed, you should contain the bat as described below, and then release it that evening. **If you have not seen the bat flying, if it appears injured or if it**

has been brought in by the cat, the bat should not be released. The bat will need to be assessed by a local bat care contact or vet (if no bat care contact is available) and cared for until it has fully recovered and is ready for release.

Containing the bat and care instructions



In every case, we advise that the bat be contained to prevent it getting lost while a bat carer is contacted or to be kept safe and comfortable for release later.

- Prepare a box with a secure fitting lid (a shoe box or disused ice cream tub would be suitable) by putting a few small air holes into the lid of the box for ventilation.
- Place the box over the bat and use a piece of cardboard to gently and carefully slide the bat into the box.

We advise that you wear gloves or use a clean tea towel to protect your hands. If you cannot put the box over the bat then an alternative is to pick the bat up gently in the tea towel and transfer the bat and tea towel to the box.

- Put a piece of clean cloth such as an old tea towel loosely crumpled in one corner of the box. The bat will feel safer if it has something to crawl into and hide.
- Place a very small shallow container (such as a bottle top) with a few drops of water (not enough for the bat to drown in) in another corner so the bat does not dehydrate.
- Put the box somewhere quiet and dark at room temperature.
- Check the box regularly (every couple of hours) to replenish water if it has evaporated or been drunk.

Please contact the National Bat Helpline on 0345 1300 228 if you have found a bat, to receive advice and for bat carer numbers in your area.

Releasing the bat

If you find an adult bat which has just landed; if it appears healthy, hasn't been involved in a cat attack and the weather conditions are appropriate it may be suitable for release. Keep the bat contained for the day as described above and then release it that evening. When it is dark outside place the box on its side on top of a wall or shed, at least five feet off the ground. Using gloves bring the cloth out of the box to allow the bat to fly away when it is ready. Watch the bat closely for about fifteen minutes. If the bat does not fly away within this time, take it back inside and get expert help from the National Bat Helpline.

Baby bats need expert help

All British bats are small and you may be surprised at the size. Baby bats are typically found in June, July or early August. . Baby bats are about the size of a 50 pence piece and when very young, have little or no fur. If you are sure it is a baby, or are in any doubt, the bat must be helped as quickly as possible as baby bats cannot survive for very long without expert care. Please contain and care for the baby as you would an adult bat and call the National Bat Helpline (0345 1300 228) immediately.

The presence of a baby bat in the living areas is a sure sign that there is a maternity bat roost nearby. Seeking advice from the Helpline as early as possible may make it possible for it to be returned to its mother.

Please DO NOT attempt to return the bat to the roost yourself as the baby may have been abandoned by its mother. This can only be attempted by an experienced licensed bat worker who has first identified the roost location and assessed the status of the roost.

Bats and Rabies

A small number of bats in the UK have been found to carry rabies. This virus is transmitted via a bite or scratch from an infected animal so the risk is very small and is removed if you do not handle the bat. Bats seldom show any aggression but they are wild animals and may be frightened or in pain. In situations where handling is necessary, i.e. if a grounded or injured bat needs to be contained, **wear protective gloves or use a tea towel and handle the bat as little as possible**. If despite precautions you are bitten or scratched by a bat or if a bite or scratch is suspected:

- Wash the area bitten or scratched immediately with soap and water for at least five minutes. Additional cleansing of the area with an alcohol base or other disinfectant is also recommended.
- Seek advice from your doctor or walk-in clinic as soon as possible.
- Inform the duty vet at your local animal health authority of the incident as soon as possible. In England, Wales and Scotland – call the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA), selecting the option for suspicion of diseases. For England call 03000 200 301, Wales call 0300 303 8268, Scotland see <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/animal-and-plant-health-agency/about/access-and-opening#scotland-field-service-offices> for local contacts. For Northern Ireland call Declan Looney at the Department of Environment on 02890 569 602.
- Please see www.bats.org.uk for further details.

How do I prevent the bat(s) from entering my living areas again?

Entering via windows

If the bat has obviously entered your room via an open window, we would recommend keeping that particular window closed during the summer months (principally at peak maternity season between mid-July and mid-August) at dusk and at night time to prevent any bats from entering by mistake. However, if you need to keep a window open for ventilation, it may be worth putting up net curtains or insect mesh-netting (see appendix B for details of an example) across the inside of the window.

Entering via internal gaps

(NB Please do not attempt to block any internal gaps if your property does not have a loft void. If this is the case please seek further advice).

If windows are not being left open and bats are still entering living areas, they may have lost their way from a roost in the building. We recommend you;

- Look for any internal gaps such as around pipes into the ceilings, bathrooms, kitchen or airing cupboards, around loft hatches, window frames, between floor joists and in ceiling or skirting corners.
- Any gap wider than 8mm can be regarded as a potential entry point.

- These internal access points should be sealed to prevent further entry by bats.
- Between 1 May and 1 October these gaps may only be temporarily blocked.
- Providing no fire risk is created (e.g. blocking a hole around the flue to a solid fuel cooker), paper, cloth and upholsterers' foam can all be used.

Please do not use sealant during these summer months as bats may become stuck to any sealant used, or may be poisoned by any fumes produced.

- Such gaps and holes may then be permanently blocked from 1 October onwards, when bats are likely to be hibernating elsewhere.
- Paper maché, polyfilla, decorator's caulking or silicone type sealant or any other suitable material* can then be used once the bats are absent.
- Do not use expanding foam for sealing up these gaps.

**Where there is a fire risk, please use a suitably inert material. For example, crumpled up wire mesh or netting could be used to fill the gap temporarily and help hold plaster or fire cement in place.*

Please note that although the internal gaps may be blocked, the external gap where the bats enter their roost MUST NOT be obstructed in any way. It is important to follow this advice to ensure that the law is not broken and to help conserve the bat colony that depends on this roost in the long term.

If you are having any problems identifying where the bats are gaining access into your living areas or in the unlikely event that bats continue to be found within your living areas after you have followed the advice in this leaflet, please contact your Statutory Nature Conservation Organisation (SNCO) or the Bat Conservation Trust on 0345 1300 228 for further advice.

Summary of the law relating to bats

All bats and their roosts are protected under The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017. Bats may only be handled by licensed Volunteer Bat Roost Visitors whilst in their roosts, but if a bat is found in trouble away from its roost, a licence is not required to handle them for the purpose of rehabilitation and release. Anyone who has or may potentially have a bat roost in their dwelling house is entitled to free advice from their SNCO should they require it.

If I have a roost can I undertake works at my property?

The law protecting bats is strict and so it is best to organise works to avoid affecting bats or their roosts, thereby avoiding the risk of committing offences. If you need to undertake any works that may affect a roost at your property, it is recommended that you take the necessary precautions by seeking advice on how to do works lawfully. This advice can be provided by the Statutory Nature Conservation Organisation (SNCO) for your country, or through an ecological consultant.

England:	Natural England (via BCT)	0345 1300 228
Northern Ireland:	Northern Ireland Environment Agency	028 9039 5264
Scotland:	Scottish Natural Heritage	01463 725 165 / batsinhouses@snh.gov.uk
Wales:	Natural Resources Wales	0300 065 3000 (ask for the species team)

Appendix A: Grounded bat flowchart

I've found a grounded and/or injured or orphaned bat.

If the bat is on ground or in an exposed position outdoors, the first step is to contain it in a box (shoe box/ice cream tub). Ensure the box has air holes and a lid.

Contain the bat like you would a spider: Place a box on top of it and slide a piece of card underneath. **WEAR GLOVES/USE A TEA TOWEL** if you have to handle the bat due to **the rabies risk***.

Has the bat been **seen flying recently** and seem active and healthy?

NO

YES

NO

Is it late May – August?

YES

NO

Is it between 1st November and 31st March, **or** is the temperature below 5°C at night?

YES

This is likely to be a baby or juvenile bat

This is an adult bat

Replace box lid and bring back indoors

***Bats and rabies – the facts:**

Some bats in Europe can carry a rabies virus called European Bat Lyssaviruses (EBLV). This is very rare in the UK – only a small number of bats have tested positive for the live viruses despite thousands having been tested. Please see www.bats.org.uk for most up to date figures.

Rabies is passed on via a bite or scratch from an infected animal, or from its saliva coming in contact with your mucous membranes (for example your eyes, mouth or nose).

Check care instructions below, and release after sunset.

Place the box on its side somewhere about 2 metres from the ground and watch it closely for 15 minutes to make sure the bat flies off safely.

Baby bats and bats caught by cats should not be released, and should be seen by a carer or vet ASAP.

Again, **wear gloves or use a tea towel to protect your hands** if you have to handle the bat (due to the **rabies risk***).

After 15 minutes, has the bat flown away?

NO

Care instructions:

- Put a **loosely crumpled tea towel/soft cloth** for the bat to hide under/cling to.
- Put in a **small, shallow container** (e.g. a plastic milk bottle top) with only a **few drops of water**. Not enough for the bat to drown in!
- Check box regularly (every couple of hours) to **replenish water** if evaporated/drunk.
- Put the box somewhere **quiet** and **dark** at **room temperature**.

Call the National Bat Helpline on 0345 1300 228 to see if there is a local Bat Care Network contact in the area. These are volunteers who may be able to provide further assistance with grounded/injured/baby bats.

Please give the volunteer a reasonable amount of time to respond. If there are no volunteer in your area, please take the bat to a vet.

All vets have a duty of care to all wild animals. Please give the vet the Helpline number above for advice, as well as details of where and when the bat was found.

Appendix B: Example window insect mesh

These fly screens are a Universal product so fit any hinged window. They are easy to fit with Velcro fixing tape included. The fabric is washable and low maintenance.

This and similar products can be bought at a number of garden centres but can be found at a fraction of the price on websites such as Amazon.co.uk (typically under £10).



Product Features and Technical Details

Product Features

- 1.3x1.5mtr window screen
- Fixed by Hook and Loop Velcro (5.6mtr included)
- Fine mesh screen
- Effective barrier
- Lets fresh air in
- Trim to fit

Technical Details

Trim to fit sizes up to 1.3 X 1.5m

Idea came from bat worker Jackie Wedd
Information and images from Amazon.co.uk and gardentoolbox.co.uk