



Read on to find out about my batty friends who live by some of Britain's waterways.



There are lots of myths and misunderstandings about bats and that is why some people are frightened of them. There is no need to be frightened as bats do not harm humans. In fact, many bats help us by eating insects.

In Britain there are 16 species of bat. All are rare and some of these species are endangered. This means that there is a real chance that these bats will become extinct, if we don't protect them! That is why bats and their roosts are now protected by law - only bat experts are allowed to handle them.

Several species of bats live near the waterways: the Noctule bat (pictured opposite), Greater Horseshoe bat, Long-eared Bat, Daubenton's bat, Natterer's bat and the Serotine bat.

Bats are nocturnal and they are the only mammal in the world to be able to really fly. They have furry bodies, are warm blooded and give birth to live young which feed from the mother.

Did you know that the world's smallest mammal is the Bumblebee bat of Thailand? It weighs less than a penny! WOW!



Many people think that bats just live in caves. Bat roosts can also be found in many other different places where there are small crevices for them to live.

Old trees can provide good roosts for bats especially if they have crevices and hollows.

As natural roosts like trees have become scarcer the bats have started to make use of bridges and tunnels on the waterways for their roosts.

'Bat bricks' have been placed in some bridges, tunnels and aqueducts. Bat bricks are artificial roosts but the bats don't seem to mind! They're a great way to try and conserve the British bat population.

If you want to look for signs of bat life then try looking at the ground! You may see their droppings under bridges, aqueducts and in tunnels.



British bats feed on insects. As they are nocturnal mammals they feed at night. They use a special system called echolocation which allows them to avoid obstacles and catch their prey in the dark.

Echolocation works like this: bats send out sound waves through their mouth or nose. When the sound hits an object an echo comes back. The bat can identify an object by the sound of the echo. They can even tell the size and shape of a tiny insect from its echo!

Click [here](#) for some bat sounds!

The picture on the left shows a Greater Horseshoe bat. It has a horse shoe shaped nose which helps it during echolocation.

Bats hibernate during the winter. To prepare for this females and young bats need a good supply of insects to feed on in the autumn. They can put on about a third of their body mass during this period.

Adult males, however, stay thin until much later. They prefer to spend most of the autumn mating rather than eating!