

BAT SPOTTING: ACTIVITY GUIDE

Bat spotting is an exciting and educational activity that allows participants to engage with their local bat population. Seeing and identifying bats not only promotes conservation efforts but also fosters a deeper appreciation for these fascinating creatures. This guide will provide you with the essential information needed to organise a successful bat spotting evening.



Ideal Time for Spotting Bats:

Bats are nocturnal, and the best time to spot bats is at dusk when they emerge to feed on insects. Spring and summer months are the best time to go bat spotting as all 18 species of bats in Britain hibernate over winter, between November - April. Bats do not like hunting for insects in driving rain as there are fewer insects in the air and it can affect their ability to navigate using echolocation, so dry evenings are best.

Preferred Habitats:

Bats are often found near water sources like rivers, ponds, and wetlands. Woodlands, meadows, and man-made structures such as old buildings and bridges also serve as important habitats for these creatures. Bats often use hedgerows and rivers as navigational points of reference, frequently flying alongside these features in the landscape.



Common Bat Species:

Within Oxfordshire and Gloucestershire, common bat species include the Common Pipistrelle, Soprano Pipistrelle, Daubenton's Bat, Natterer's Bat, Noctule Bat, Long-Brown Eared Bat, Western Barbastelle, Serotine, and Leisler's Bat also live here. Understanding the characteristics of these bats can help participants identify them.

Identifying Bat Species:

Visual and echolocation clues are key to identifying common bat species. Look for specific wing shapes, sizes, and flight patterns. Listening for echolocation calls can also aid in species identification. FSC guides are excellent in helping to assist with bat identification.



Equipment for Bat Spotting:

Bat detectors that convert echolocation calls into audible sounds are easy to use and great for budding bat enthusiasts. We can help put you in touch with local organisations that lend out bat detectors to groups and individuals. We also have a number of guides and information sheets available to borrow at the Cotswolds National Landscape.

Useful Links

Bat Conservation Trust: www.bats.org.uk/about-bats

Gloucestershire Bat Group: www.glosbats.org.uk

Oxfordshire Bat Group: www.oxfordshirebats.org

Field Studies Council: www.field-studies-council.org/shop/publications/bats-guide



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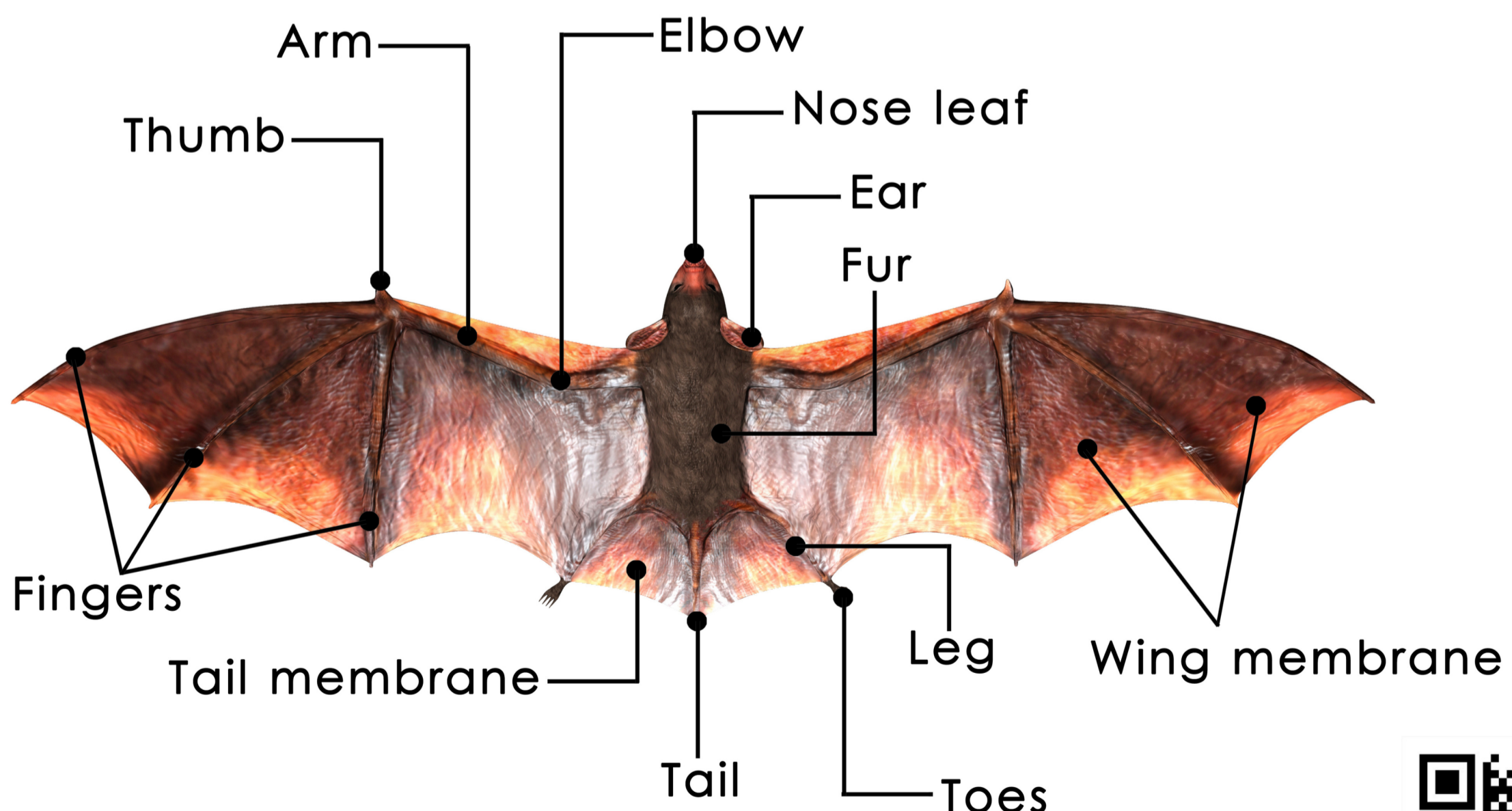
Safety considerations and responsibilities:

- Trips and slips in the dark: Provide lighting sources when it gets dark (eg. torches)
- Infection and disease: Wash hands after coming into contact with bat droppings,. Wear a mask if coming in an area with lots of dried bat droppings. Do not handle bats directly without proper training and PPE.
- Protected species: All bat breeding sites and resting places are protected by law.

Ten Top Facts about Bats

1. Bats are nocturnal creatures, which means they are most active at night when it's dark outside.
2. Bats come in various sizes, with the smallest in the UK being the Pipistrelle bat, with a body as small as a human thumb and a wingspan of about 20cm.
3. There are 1,400 bat species in the world, but just 18 species can be found in the UK. The most common in the UK is the Common Pipistrelle making up 75% of bat sightings here.
4. Whilst bats are the only mammals capable of true flight, they differ from birds as they have hair on their bodies, which helps to keep them warm and protected.
5. A single bat can eat up to 3,000 insects in one night, including moths and mosquitoes, making them great natural pest controllers. Some also eat fruits and seeds, which helps make them important pollinators as they spread seed and maintain plant diversity.
6. Bats use echolocation to navigate and find food in the dark. They emit high-pitched sounds that bounce back, helping them locate objects and insects. Humans can use electronic echolocators, to help them hear these noises, although some children with sensitive ears can hear these high pitched sounds without the help of technology.
7. Most bats in the UK hibernate during the winter, between the months of November - April. They like to hang upside down in cosy spots like caves, roof eaves or tree hollows to rest.
8. Some species of bats such as Brandt's bat can live up to 40 years, and the Greater Horseshoe can live until they are 30. However, the most common species, the Pipistrelles, have an average lifespan of just 4-5 years.
9. Contrary to popular myths, bats are not blind - they can see quite well, especially in low light.
10. Bats can reach speeds of up to 60 miles per hour while flying, making them one of the fastest mammals. Some bats can fly as high as 1.9 miles in the air while searching for food.

Bat Anatomy



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