

St Peter's Nocturnal Neighbours



The Bats of St Peter's

At least 3 species of bat call St Peter's home: Natterer's, Brown Long-Eared and Pipistrelles. They use the church all year round; as a breeding roost in the summer and for hibernation during winter.



Can You Spot Signs of Bats in the Church?

Can you spot any Butterfly wings on the floor? Butterflies and moths are a favourite snack of bats – but they don't like to eat the wings! So if you spot any on the floor we know the bats have been enjoying a tasty treat.

You can see their droppings scattered throughout the main body of the church. Spots on the walls will show favourite climbing routes.

Be careful not to touch and make sure you wash your hands.

Natterer's Bat

Bat Stats:

Length: 4-5cm

Wingspan: 24.5-30cm

Weight: 7-12g

Average lifespan: 7 years

The Natterer's bat feeds on midges, moths and other flying insects that they find in the dark by using echolocation. They also like to eat beetles and spiders that they take directly from hedges and trees.

They are quite slow fliers and can be found hunting over water and among the trees after sunset. They roost in old buildings like churches and castles, but rarely in houses.

The Natterer's bat is medium-sized, with fairly long ears and a bare, pink face. Its fur is light brownish-grey on its back and pale on its belly. There is a row of stiff hairs on the edge of its tail.

Natterer's bats will hibernate in small crevices, squeezing themselves into odd positions, including lying on their backs or sides, or even on their heads!



Pipistrelle Bat

Bat Stats:

Length: 3.5-4.5cm

Wingspan: 20-23cm

Weight: 3-8g

Average lifespan: 4-5 years

The Common Pipistrelle is the UK's smallest and most common bat. They feed on midges, moths and other flying insects that they find in the dark by using echolocation.

The Common Pipistrelle has dark, golden-brown fur, a slightly paler underside and a dark mask around the face. Its flight is rapid with lots of twists and turns. The Soprano Pipistrelle is similar in appearance, so the two can be difficult to tell apart.

Look out for Pipistrelles darting about as they hunt for insects in gardens or around streetlights just after sunset.



Brown Long-Eared Bat

Bat Stats:

Length: 3.7-5.2cm

Wingspan: 20-30cm

Weight: 6-12g

Average lifespan: 4-5 years but can get up to 22 years old!

The Brown Long-Eared bat is a medium sized bat with huge ears. As with all UK bats, they are nocturnal, only coming out at night to feed on midges, moths and other flying insects.

The Brown Long-Eared bat has greyish-brown fur and characteristically big ears, nearly as long as its body. It has flies quite slowly and flutters like a butterfly.

The Brown Long-Eared bat is known as the 'whispering bat', because its voice is very quiet - no need to shout when you have such big ears! When resting, it tends to either curl its ears back or tuck them under its wings.



A Year in the Life of a Bat

In **April** bats come out from hibernation. They are hungry and very active feeding most nights but can go back if the weather is cold.

In **May** female bats start forming maternity colonies and look for suitable nursery sites to bring us their young. Males roost on their own or in small groups.

In **June** Female bats give birth. Young bats are called pups and are very small – less than an inch long! Adult bats will be out hunting catching thousands of insects each night.

In **July** Mothers nurture their young (with milk of course – they are mammals). Young bats can sometimes be found on the ground as they learn to fly.

In **August** the pups take to the wing and start catching their own dinner. Maternity colonies break up and new roosts are formed.

In **September and October** it's the mating season. Males use special calls including purrs and clicks to attract a mate. Bats are building their fat supplies and looking for good places to hibernate.

In **November** bats go into hibernation for the winter. They use their fat stores to survive the colder months. They may hibernate on their own or in groups often in cool quiet places like our churches.

Say Cheese!

Share your St
Peter's Experience
with us on Social
Media:



Bat Spotting

Bats are tricky to spot as they come out at night, are very quiet (to human ears) and fly really quickly. Sometimes you catch a glimpse of one and it's gone before you've realised.

You are more likely to see bats around sunset or sunrise in warm, dry weather. The summer months especially August and September are good for spotting bats as they are more active.

You'll spot them in quiet areas and where insects gather – so over water, fields or even in the glow of street lights!

You can also use special detectors to make their echolocation calls audible to humans. Different species of bat have different calls so it's easier to tell the difference.



Bat Facts



Bats are the only true flying mammals in the world



There are 18 species of bats in the UK almost a quarter of UK mammal species.



All UK bat species use echolocation to navigate and hunt for insects in the dark



Bats usually only have one baby a year



Bats can live surprisingly long lives. 5 or 6 years is usual for a Pipistrelle but some species can live over 30 years!



Bats eat thousands of insects. A pipistrelle can easily get through 3000 midges on a single night.



In the UK bats are protected by law. It is illegal to kill a bat or disturb the places where they roost.