

Bat Conservation Trust



National Bat Helpline Volunteer Out of Hours Project

Project description and work details

Background

The Bat Conservation Trust (BCT) is proud to be the leading non-governmental organisation devoted solely to the conservation of bats and their habitats. BCT's vision is a world rich in wildlife where bats and people thrive together. Our mission is to conserve bats for present and future generations. Through education, collaborative action and scientific research, we inspire individuals and organisations to value and speak out for bats.

BCT's strategic objectives are:

- Discover: To ensure scientific evidence is in place to support bat conservation
- Act: To secure and enhance bat populations and their resilience in a changing world
- Inspire: To win the levels of support required to secure and enhance bat populations
- Strengthen: BCT to achieve financial stability and sustainable staff workloads. Staff and volunteers are motivated and well led

BCT's core expertise includes: biodiversity delivery (an experienced lead partner for several bat species in the UK Biodiversity Strategy); the National Bat Monitoring Programme (coordinating 1000 volunteer surveyors for our 6 surveys each year); delivering advice about bats (through the National Bat Helpline and through long-term partnerships with the statutory nature conservation organisations); training professionals and volunteers; and engaging and educating wider audiences.

The Project

During the active bat season (May-September), BCT runs an Out Of Hours (OOH) helpline service to deal with emergency calls from the public. We need volunteers to enable us to run this service in the evenings, at weekends and on bank holidays.

The OOH shifts run as follows:

- Monday–Thursday:- from 5.30pm until the volunteer leaves for work the following morning
- Friday–Saturday:- from 5.30pm Friday until 9am Saturday
- Saturday-Sunday:- from 9am until 4pm Saturday and from 4pm Saturday until 9am Sunday
- Sunday-Monday:- from 9am until 4pm Sunday and from 4pm until the volunteer leaves for work on Monday morning

Volunteers are not expected to take calls between 10:30pm and 8:00am, when the BCT answerphone takes messages. However, if due to circumstances beyond their control the volunteer cannot answer the phone during their shift, then an answerphone can be activated to take calls, with a message saying within what timeframe the caller can expect to be contacted.

Volunteers are not expected to answer non-emergency calls (including media calls). BCT will endeavour through the message on its phone technology to prevent non-emergency calls from coming through to the OOH service. Emergency calls are defined as those where a bat is grounded, injured or in immediate danger (e.g. immediate tree-felling or demolition where roosts are involved), or any situation in which there is a risk of rabies being transmitted or having been transmitted. For calls other than this the volunteer should advise the caller to contact the BCT office the next time it is open.

Training and support

All volunteers for this project will receive a day's training by experienced BCT helpline staff to obtain the necessary knowledge and techniques required whilst answering helpline calls. They will also be issued with a copy of the Out Of Hours Training Manual to refer to during shifts and provided with updates by the project coordinator. A back up member of BCT staff, contactable by telephone, will be assigned to each shift to support the volunteer and take on any cases involving bat bites or rabies risk. The project coordinator is available to support volunteers during office hours (Monday to Friday from 9am until 5:30pm). An optional conference call, that is open to all volunteers, is organised with the Project Coordinator and UK Bat Care Network Coordinator in July each year. This allows volunteers to provide feedback on the first few months and ask questions/share tips.

Work plan

1. Responding to helpline enquiries, including:
 - Answering enquiries that come through the OOH service to the volunteer's phone as a representative of BCT;
 - Highlighting the need for the BCT project coordinator to send out further information where necessary;
 - Liaising with BCT back up staff when unsure of the correct advice for a situation;
 - Promoting BCT in a positive manner at all times and actively promoting membership wherever possible.
2. Ensuring that all enquiries are logged through the electronic forms and that accurate records are kept.
3. Rabies and bat bites:
 - Informing members of the public of the small rabies risk associated with UK bats;
 - Enquiring if callers were bitten or scratched by bats;
 - Forwarding any cases involving bat bites or rabies risk on to the assigned BCT back up staff member, to ensure that appropriate advice is given and the relevant authorities informed.
4. Liaising with bat care contacts across the UK.

Expenses

BCT will refund travel expenses to/from the training day. BCT encourages the use of public transport and will reimburse the actual cost of the most economical ticket if a receipt is provided up to the cost of £100. A PIN number can be set up on a landline (dependent upon the volunteer's service provider) so that volunteers can charge the cost of a call to BCT should they need to ring an enquirer back. Where this is not possible, itemised phone bills can be sent in by volunteers to recuperate any expenses incurred as a result of the OOH service.

Length of volunteer role and shift allocation

There will be no fixed hours of work, but we hope that volunteers will be able to undertake 2 to 4 shifts per month for the duration of the project. If a volunteer wishes to stop participating in this project they should notify the Project Coordinator as soon as possible. Volunteers provide the project coordinator with their general availability at the beginning of the project, updating this as they wish throughout the season. The project coordinator will devise a monthly rota at least one week before the month commences and allocate shifts according to the availability provided. If a volunteer knows in advance that they will be unavailable for a shift they should contact BCT as soon as possible so the shift can be reallocated.

Application Procedure

Please email the project coordinator, David Jackson, at enquiries@bats.org.uk to register your interest and request an application form.