

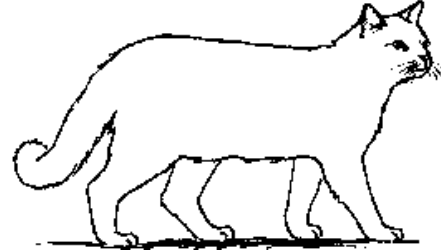
MAKE YOUR GARDEN SAFE FOR BATS



Avoid a CATastrophe

As the UK bat population has declined significantly in the last 50 years, all the UK's species of bats, and their roosts, are protected by UK and European law. Please help us to protect bats by taking steps to prevent them falling prey to your cat.

More than four and a half million families in the UK enjoy the companionship and affection of their pet cats. Only when these loveable feline friends bring in a damaged bird or bat as an offering are we reminded that they are natural predators and still have the instincts of their close relatives, the big cats like lions, pumas and tigers.



And what you see your pet doing may be only half the story. A survey carried out by the Mammal Society in the spring and summer of 1997 suggests that cats could be killing 275 million creatures a year, including a large number of bats.

But cats can't fly! How can they catch bats?

- When insects are flying low or crawling in long grass, bats may come down to ground level to feed.
- Bats sometimes land to grapple with large prey.
- Cats will instinctively pounce on anything moving, especially if it's small and furry!
- Cats may hear bats chattering before they emerge from their roost at dusk, and lie in wait.
- Pipistrelles often choose flat roofs for their maternity roost site – the space between the felt and the ceiling is hot and confined, just what they enjoy. Cats can sit on the roof and field the bats with their paws as they emerge.
- During late July and August in particular the young are still far from perfecting their flying techniques and fall easy prey to the prowling moggie.

Did my cat do that?

Most batworkers have at some time had a call to collect an injured bat that has been played with by a cat, and were expected magically to restore it to health. All too often, the animal is too badly damaged to be fully rehabilitated. Even if it can be treated and returned to the wild it has gone through suffering and trauma. Bats with broken fingers or arms, dislocated shoulders, punctured and torn wing membranes and terrible internal injuries are brought to bat carers. Even small injuries often lead to death as a result of infection.

Such suffering is unnecessary. Cats do not need to catch food to survive. They may be bored or just following natural instincts. In an experiment the kill rate fell by 80% when they were kept in at night, and it cut down their daytime killing too.

You can help save lives this summer by a few simple actions:

- Cats do not need to stay out all night. Bring your cat in half an hour before sunset so that bats can emerge undisturbed.
- If your cat doesn't take kindly to this, bring it in half an hour before sunset for at least an hour. Feed it or give it a treat.
- If you find it difficult to keep your cat in at night throughout the summer, do try to do it at least from mid June until the end of August. This is when bats are rearing their young.
- If your cat has already brought in a bat it is possible that it has found a roost, and may return to it night after night. Then it is essential to keep the cat in all night.

What should I do if I find a grounded bat?

Only handle the bat if essential; as with any wild animal use thick gloves to avoid getting bitten. Place the bat in a box and contact the Bat Conservation Trust Helpline (see below) for advice.

For more info on bats call the
Bat Conservation Trust Helpline on
0845 1300 228 or visit our website at
www.bats.org.uk

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