



# Rarities and vagrants

## Introduction

There are a number of bat species that rarely make an appearance on bat surveys. There are several reasons such as the numbers of individuals are so low that they are presumed extinct, or that they are not resident and only make an appearance having blown over from the continent. Some facts on these vagrants and rarities are detailed below, but that is not to say that these are the only ones around, and we are always interested in finding out anything you have recorded.



## Greater mouse-eared

*Myotis myotis*

### Vital statistics

Head & body length: 65mm - 80mm  
 Forearm length: 57mm - 68mm  
 Wingspan: 365mm - 450mm  
 Weight: 24g - 40g  
 Colour: The dorsal fur is a sandy colour which contrasts strongly with the white fur underneath.

### Other recorded vagrants include:

- Savi's pipistrelle *Hypsugo savii*
- Pond bat *Myotis dasycneme*
- Notch-eared bat *Myotis emarginatus*
- Northern bat *Eptesicus nilssonii*

The greater mouse-eared bat (*Myotis myotis*) is the largest bat that occurs in Britain. The past twenty-five years have seen very few records of this species and it was declared extinct in the UK in 1990.

A lone 17 year old male did not return to his hibernation site in Sussex in 1991. The last known colony was a few miles from Bognor Regis and contained several females until 1985 which was the year of their mysterious disappearance. Their departure happened around the time that a nearby cottage was destroyed by fire and as the females tend to form maternity colonies in attics they may have perished in this incident.

However in January 2001 an emaciated female was found in Bognor Regis but died shortly afterwards. It is thought that she may have been moving between hibernation sites and was caught out by the cold weather. From her worn teeth she was presumed to be quite old. She was found within 5 miles of the last known colony.

In 2002 a juvenile male was discovered hibernating in Sussex and has since been recorded annually at the same site.

## Parti-coloured bat

*Vespertilio murinus*

### Vital statistics

Head & body length: 48mm - 64mm  
 Forearm length: 40mm - 50mm  
 Wingspan: 260mm - 330mm  
 Weight: 11g - 24g  
 Colour: Its fur has a dark brown base and light tips and its head and ears are a dark brown colour. Its underside fur is strikingly white or grey compared to that on its back and its skin is dark brown.



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There were 2 records of this bat in the 1800s, one found around the port of Yarmouth and another from the port of Plymouth. Between 1927 and 2001 four turned up in Shetland.

It has been confirmed on the UK mainland at least 10 more times, once near Brick Lane in London, and appears to be the UK's most regular vagrant, with one or two records in most years since 2000. It is a well-known migrant with recorded movements of up to 850 km and has turned up occasionally on North Sea oil rigs and ships.

It occurs in woodland and farmland but also frequently in towns. Summer roosts are in trees, buildings and rock fissures. In winter it can be found in deeper caves and cellars or even high in buildings.

## Kuhl's pipistrelle

*Pipistrellus kuhlii*

### Vital statistics

Head & body length: 40mm - 50mm  
 Forearm length: 31mm - 36mm  
 Wingspan: 210mm - 250mm  
 Weight: 5g - 10g  
 Colour: Its fur colouring can be very variable with medium or yellow brown shades on its dorsal side and light grey fur on its underside. Its ears, nose and membranes are a blackish brown colour.



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Like our own pipistrelles this species has taken advantage of human structures especially for its summer roosts. It is thought to use cliff crevices and cellars in the winter. It is similar to other pipistrelles but is larger and tends to be lighter and yellowish coloured.

The first report from the British Isles occurred in 1991 and since then there have been more than ten records. One of these cases was when a holidaymaker returning home from Cyprus opened their suitcase and out popped a Kuhl's pipistrelle stowaway. Another appeared near a Felixstowe dock.

Its normal range is throughout Southern Europe from Spain through France to East Caucasus and it is regarded mainly as a Mediterranean species but recently has undergone an expansion of its range northwards. It is found up to 51°N in the Ukraine and there is a maternity colony on Jersey.