

Bat Conservation Trust



20th April 2010

Press statement: Discovery of the *Myotis alcathoe* in England

As the only national organization solely dedicated to the conservation to bat and their habitats in the UK the Bat Conservation Trust are delighted to hear that the *Myotis alcathoe* or Alcathoe's bat has been identified in England.

The Alcathoe's bat is relatively new to science, first identified as a new species in Greece in 2001 and has since been identified in other parts of Europe. The Alcathoe's bat is very similar in appearance to the UK's Brandt's bat and whiskered bat which mostly feed in wooded areas. The Alcathoe's bat is not the first new bat species to have been identified in the UK. In 1997 one of Britain's most widespread bat species the pipistrelle was found to be 2 separate species; common pipistrelle and soprano pipistrelle, so called as it echolocates at a higher frequency to the common pipistrelle. These new discoveries illustrate how much there is yet to learn about bats and with UK bat populations under threat it is vital to increase our knowledge about bats to inform conservation efforts.

Julia Hanmer, Chief Executive Bat Conservation Trust explains:

"It is incredibly exciting to learn more about bats every year. These fascinating animals live alongside us, often roosting in buildings and feeding in our parks and gardens, but there is still much more to learn about these mysterious and beautiful creatures. This summer thousands of volunteers will be watching the skies and listening to bats for the National Bat Monitoring Programme which tells us how bat populations are faring. Who knows what other discoveries are waiting to be made. With another species to add to our books the Bat Conservation Trust will be looking for new recruits to count bats and help us learn more about our vulnerable bat populations. Anyone wishing to take part can find details at www.bats.org.uk and new volunteers will be trained on becoming a bat detective"

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Notes to editor

1. The Bat Conservation Trust (BCT) is the only national organisation solely devoted to the conservation of bats and their habitats in the UK. Its network of 100 local bat groups and more than 1,000 bat workers survey roosts and hibernation sites, and work with householders, builders, farmers and foresters to protect bats.
2. BCT operates the National Bat Helpline on 0845 1300 228, providing advice for all who come into contact with bats or have questions about them. More information can be found on BCT's website, www.bats.org.uk.
3. BCT is a partner in the world-wide celebrations of 2010 as the International Year of Biodiversity. The diversity of life on earth is crucial for human well-being and now is the time to act to preserve it. For information on events, initiatives and exhibitions across the UK visit www.biodiversityislife.net

Bat Facts

- There are now 17 bat species breeding in the UK all of which are under threat from loss of habitat and changes in land use.
- Like all mammals, bats are warm-blooded, give birth and suckle their young. They are very sociable animals, living together in colonies. They are long-lived (some can live for up to 30 years), are intelligent, highly mobile and more agile in flight than most birds.
- Bats fly and feed in the dark, which they are able to do by producing a stream of high frequency calls and listening to the returning echoes which give a distinct 'sound picture' of the surroundings. This is called echolocation, and can only be heard by humans through use of a device called a bat detector.
- Bats in the UK eat only insects (such as midges, moths and mosquitoes), which they catch in flight or pick off water, foliage or the ground. The pipistrelle can eat up to 3,000 midges in one night – one-third of its body weight!
- Declining bat numbers have made it necessary to legally protect all UK bats and their roosts, whether they are in residence or not. This protection also makes it an offence to block their entrance and exit holes without seeking advice.