



Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)

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When to help a Flittermouse

By Nikki Banfield, Isles of Scilly Wildlife Trust Communications Officer

The mornings and evenings are darker; the air is cooler; the Islands are mostly being pummelled by big seas, buckets of wind and lashings of rain. It would appear that November is officially here and, not wanting to be accused of being overly dramatic, well, it's a little wet and windy.

However, in spite of this we have had the odd days (and nights) respite, and during those times it's still been possible to watch our resident, and possibly migratory, Bats venturing out to feed.

Bats were once common in Scilly, but by the 1990's they seemed almost to have disappeared. This is undoubtedly down to habitat loss; improvements to barns and buildings which they would have roosted in and food availability (limited by the use of insecticides on farms). Due to changes in these practices, Bat numbers now appear to be recovering.

In Scilly 7 species of Bat have been recorded; however, only 3 are known to be resident; Common pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus*), Soprano pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pygmaeus*) and Brown long-eared bat (*Plecotus auritus*). Other species such as Nathusius pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus nathusii*) are migrant, but could also be resident; we just don't know.

Here at the Isles of Scilly Wildlife Trust we are working hard (as always!) to remedy the lack of knowledge situation; carrying out year round survey and monitoring work with the aim to increase our understanding of the beautiful Flittermice within our Islands.

To that end Rangers Darren M (Batman 1) & Darren H (Batman 2) have completed a number of professional Bat related courses, including their Advanced Bat Techniques training which allows them to handle this protected species should it be required; and a couple of days ago, it was!

We often receive enquiries and calls for help; sometimes it's fairly simple and straight-forwards to deal with, other times not so much!

Did you know?
An adult Pipistrelle weighs approximately 5g and has to eat 1/3 to 1/4 of it's body weight in insects each night. That's about 3000 mosquitoes, flies & other bugs!

We know our Islands hold the UK's southern-most population of Common pipistrelle but we currently don't have sufficient data to know much more for certain.



On a damp Tuesday morning in November we received a message from a friend ...

*“Help! I found this Bat in a bucket of water.
He’s still alive. Just”,
... with this picture attached.*



*Bat fished out of a bucket of water
by Neil Jenkins*

Looking at the picture we didn’t hold out much hope but we advised Neil to pop it in a box and drop it to our offices and we’d get either Batman 1 or Batman 2 to take a look and see what we could do.

First thing to try and do was dry the soggy little Flittermouse out and warm him up; but how do you do that? We opted for putting him in a dark box with a cozy warm towel, next to a radiator for a bit, and then we waited.

After a couple of hours Batman 2 returned to have a look and see what was going on; to our surprise instead of finding an expired Bat we found a cozy, dry, warm and now fairly active one. As he had now perked up and seemed a whole lot less fragile, Darren H gave him the once over checking body and wing condition for any obvious injuries



During this process the Bat was very wiggly and vocal, which is generally a good sign, and he seemed to be a lot happier and stronger than he had been on arrival.

It was returned to the box, given access to a **small** amount of water (we didn’t want it ending up back at square one!), some food and left to its own devices once again.

On the return of Batman 1 we had another look at the Bat to see how he was getting on and discovered that he (as we’d been calling him) was in fact a she!

A beautiful, now very fluffy and warm, feisty, female Common Pipistrelle.



Consensus was that the best course of action given her recovery was to try and release her, overnight, as soon as possible; however, the weather conditions were working against us! Bats don’t like being cold and wet!

Luckily for this little lady, there was a “weather window” at around about 0330 the following morning; a dedicated Batman awoke early in order to take her back to where she was found and release her where she joined a number of other Bats that were flying around and feeding before returning to roost at dawn.

If you find a Bat during the day or injured it’s important not to touch it; Bats may be little but they have a nasty bite and can carry diseases, additionally they are a protected species.

We are finding out more about our Bats all the time and if you would like to know more then head on over to our website.



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