

Bats in Castlegregory

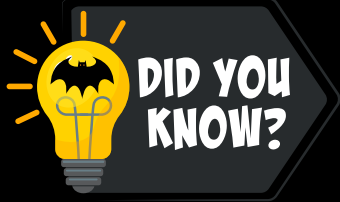


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Photo: Lesser Horseshoe Bat in flight



Castlegregory is home to several bat roosts, including along Forge Road, around the playground, and Kelly Heights. As dusk settles... if you stop quietly... look up ...watch the skies carefully... you might just see bat after bat emerging from their homes (roosts) gracefully sweeping through the night air in search of food (mainly insects). These small nocturnal mammals play an important role in keeping insect numbers in balance and are a valued part of our village's natural heritage.



- 9 bat species are known to live in Ireland, belonging to two families: Vespertilionidae and Rhinolophidae.
- 8 are part of the Vespertilionidae family: common pipistrelle, soprano pipistrelle, Nathusius' pipistrelle, Leisler's bat, brown long-eared bat, Daubenton's bat, whiskered bat, and Natterer's bat.
- 1 of its kind on Ireland, the Lesser Horseshoe bat (*Rhinolophus hipposideros*) is the only Irish bat species in the Rhinolophidae family.

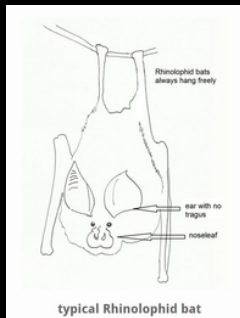
Lesser Horseshoe Bat / crú-ialtóg bheag - Why is this bat so unique?

Unique shape of their nose

They have a distinctive, horseshoe-shaped fold of skin around the nose, called a **noseleaf**, which helps them focus their echolocation calls.

The way they sleep

Unlike other Irish bats, they hang freely when roosting and cannot land or crawl, wrapping their wings tightly around their bodies while they rest.



typical Rhinolophid bat



Image: Lesser Horseshoe Bat sleeping

6 Lesser Horseshoe bat facts

1. Their wing span ranges 22-25cm, body length is 35-39mm and it weighs 6-9g.
2. Their fur is greyish in young bats and becomes buff coloured in adults.
3. Its calls peak in the range of 105-115 kHz (i.e. high frequency).
4. Irish bats give birth to one pup per year (sometimes twins in some cases) and nurse them with milk.
5. This bat often selects old buildings, caves, or underground sites to roost.
6. The species is sensitive to disturbance and light. This is the reason why we selected bat friendly lights (downward projection & warm light) along the playground path.
7. Because of its flight style and echolocation, the lesser horseshoe bat tends to fly close to linear features like hedgerows, treelines or woodland edges, using them like "bat highways."



Forge Road, Castlegregory

Photo: Lesser Horseshoe Bat found in Forge Road



This BAT educational sign is funded by the Local Enhancement Programme 2025:



Sources: www.batconservationireland.org; www.npws.ie; www.species.biodiversityireland.ie/

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Bat contribution to Humans

Bats are more than fascinating night-time fliers. Bats have inspired some of humanity's greatest innovations.

→ Echolocation

Bats use echolocation (ultrasonic calls) to navigate and locate prey in the dark, analysing echoes. The echolocation frequencies bats use are often ultrasonic (above human hearing), but some detectors or apps allow us to "hear" them.

→ Agile Flight

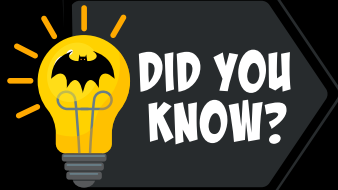
Bats' wings are remarkably flexible, elongated fingers covered by a thin membrane that allows lift, agility & control far beyond that of birds or insects. Each finger joint in a bat's wing moves independently. Bats also adjust their wing shape mid-flight to save energy.

→ Precise Control

Bats' wings are made of a thin, elastic membrane stretched across highly articulated bones, with more than two dozen joints. This complexity gives them precise control over wing tension, curvature, and folding, enabling smooth, dynamic movement in three dimensions.

→ Healthy Habitat

Bats are indicators of healthy habitat as they rely on clean water sources, intact insect populations and safe roosts. By protecting bats and their habitats, we not only safeguard a vital part of Ireland's biodiversity but also continue to learn from nature's original inventors.

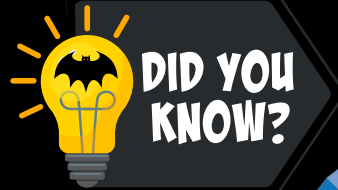


DID YOU KNOW?

- Bats inspired naval sonar and ultrasound technology used in medicine.

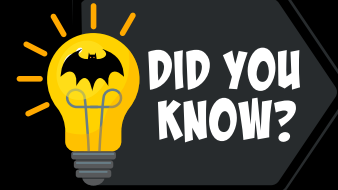
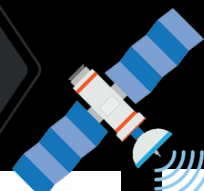


- A bat's echolocation is so precise they can detect very small insects and avoid obstacles mid-flight.



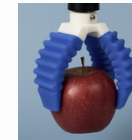
DID YOU KNOW?

- Bat wing structures inspired designs of micro-air vehicles (MAVs) and soft-winged drones that can hover, twist and turn in tight spaces*.
- Bats adjusting wing shape mid flight is used as a design principle in folding-wing drones built for long-duration or stealth missions.

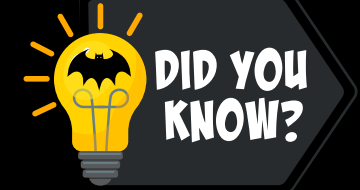


DID YOU KNOW?

- Bats' flexible wings & folding motions are inspiring a new generation of soft & adaptive robots:



- Soft robotic arms to handle fruit or surgical instruments gently
- Inspection robots that fold to enter pipes / tunnels.
- Wearable exosuits that support rehabilitation or enhance mobility



DID YOU KNOW?

1 Irish pipistrelle bat, in single **1** night, can eat **3000** mosquitos.



This BAT educational sign is funded by the Local Enhancement Programme 2025:



Sources: www.batconservationireland.org; www.npws.ie; www.species.biodiversityireland.ie; * (University of Illinois "Bat Bot" project, Science Robotics, 2017)

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10 Bat Facts vs 10 Bat Myths

Think you know bats? Discover some surprising facts and bust a few common myths about Ireland's night-time neighbours.

FACTS

Fact 1: There are more than 1,400 species of bats worldwide, tiny bumblebee bats to large flying foxes. Ireland has 9 bat species.

Fact 2: Bats make up around 20% of all mammal species on Earth.

Fact 3: Bats are ancient creatures with fossils dating back over 52 million years.

Fact 4: Bats are the only mammals capable of true flight (not just gliding).

Fact 5: Some bats can live over 20 - 30 years in the wild remarkable longevity for such small animals.



Pipistrelle Bat

Fact 6: The Leisler's bat, found in Ireland, is the largest of our native species with a wingspan of up to 34 cm.

Fact 7: Irish bats hibernate in caves, mines and cellars during the winter, often returning to the same spot year after year.

Fact 8: Bats are highly social animals. Many bat species form lifelong friendships, groom each other, and share food.

Fact 9: Bats can adjust their calling frequency and intensity depending on surroundings (open vs cluttered habitat).

Fact 10: All Irish bats are legally protected; the lesser horseshoe bat is listed under Annex II of the EU Habitats Directive, meaning its key habitats must be designated and maintained.



Daubetoun's bat

MYTHS

Myth 1: "Bats are blind" - Truth: Bats can see (especially in low light) and many species also use echolocation to navigate.

Myth 2: "Bats get tangled in your hair" - Truth: echolocation and agile flight allow bats to avoid obstacles, including humans.

Myth 3: "All bats are blood-drinking vampires." - Truth: very few bat species (in Central / South America) drink blood; no Irish bats do.

Myth 4: "Bats bite and are dirty" - Truth: bats are clean, gentle creatures who avoid humans. Bites are rare unless a bat is handled or threatened.

Myth 5: Bats are just "flying rats" - Truth: Bats are in their own order, Chiroptera, not rodents.

Myth 6: "Bats always live in caves" - Truth: Many bats roost in buildings, tree cavities, under bark, or in rock crevices.

Myth 7: "If a bat flies into your house, someone will die." - Truth: This is a traditional Irish superstition, but it's just folklore. Bats often enter buildings while chasing insects or seeking roosts.

Myth 8: "Bats cause bad luck." - Truth: In China, bats symbolise good fortune and happiness; five bats together represent the "Five Blessings" (long life, wealth, health, love of virtue, and a peaceful death).

Myth 9: "All bats hibernate in winter." - Truth: Many Irish bats do, but not all. Some species migrate short distances or find sheltered roosts where they enter a light torpor instead of deep hibernation.

Myth 10: "Bats don't belong in cities." - Truth: Urban green spaces, rivers, and even back gardens are important bat habitats. Many species, including pipistrelles, thrive in towns and villages.



Sources: www.batconservationireland.org; www.npws.ie; www.species.biodiversityireland.ie

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Protect Castlegregory's Bats



Bats are part of what makes Castlegregory special. They share our skies, gardens, and old buildings. The rare lesser horseshoe bat, found here in West Kerry, depends on safe roosts, dark skies, and connected hedgerows. By planting native trees, keeping lights low, and caring for old stone buildings, our community can help these night-time neighbours thrive for generations to come.

Keep habitats connected

- Retain and link hedgerows, treelines and shrubs– they are safe “bat highways”.
- Plant native species such as hawthorn, hazel, willow or alder.
- Avoid heavy cutting and leave corridors unlit whenever possible.



Look after old buildings

- Lesser horseshoe bats often roost in old houses, sheds and barns.
- If you plan repairs or renovations, seek bat-friendly advice before closing roof gaps or vents. Roosts and the bats themselves are protected under Irish and EU law.



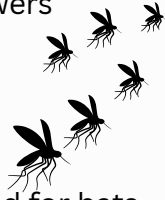
Reduce Light Pollution

- Use warm-tone, downward-facing lights on timers or motion sensors.
- Dark corridors help bats travel and hunt safely, even a single floodlight can block a vital route.



Grow insect-rich gardens

- Avoid pesticides,
- Grow night-scented flowers (honeysuckle, jasmine, evening primrose),
- Keep ponds or log piles for insect life.
- More insects = more food for bats.



Join in & learn

- Take part in bat walks, report sightings to batconservationireland.org or the National Biodiversity Data Centre.
- Support local groups such as Kerry Biosphere, TidyTowns and Vincent Wildlife Trust.



Every action counts

- By keeping a hedge, dimming a light or saving an old building, you help sustain Kerry's population of the lesser horseshoe bat – one of Ireland's most remarkable nocturnal neighbours.

