



# Bats about Plumpton

Over the last 27 years I have been asked to visit many houses in the parish to advise about the bats there. A number of these I have not been back to and some will have changed ownership, or the bats may have moved on. These house visits include at least six bat species. All species shift resting place (their roost) on a seasonal basis (or for other reasons), but some are very faithful to particular sites at particular times of year. They are most obvious in the summer when females gather together into a group (a colony) to produce and raise their single young each.

The UN Environment Programme/CMS (Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species) has declared 2011/2012 a global Year of the Bat. UNEP has also declared 2011 the International Year of Forests, which is perhaps a nice coincidence since, particularly in the tropics, bats are important in maintaining the pollination and seed dispersal of forest trees. In many other areas they are also important in the control of insect pests of agriculture and forestry. The 1100 or so bat species contribute important 'ecosystem services' to the world as a whole.

So, what can Plumpton do for Year of the Bat? Well, what I hope to do is revisit all those properties I have visited over the years and see if the bats are still there. If bats are still there I plan to check on the species present and then see if we can arrange to count the bats out as they emerge in the evening. This would be done on two evenings in June and (with permission) the data would be incorporated into the National Bat Monitoring Programme – these colony counts are one of the methods used to track the ups and downs of bat populations throughout the country. The counts could be done by the owners or by other volunteers. As far as possible the counts will be helped with the use of a 'bat detector', a little device that converts their ultrasonic calls to something we can hear; it can be used just to alert one to the presence of a bat, but also helps to verify the species.

If you have bats (whether you think I know about them or not) and are interested in helping with the project, or if you don't have bats in your own house but would be interested to help count somebody else's bats, please let me know and I will organise a little introductory session.

Similarly, if you think you might want to assist in more detailed surveys of bats in the area, please contact me.

For more general information about the bats of Sussex and some other local events see the website of the Sussex Bat Group (<http://www.sussexbats.org.uk/>). For a wider view and details of the National Bat Monitoring Programme go to the Bat Conservation Trust (<http://www.bats.org.uk/>).

Note that, even in houses, bats are protected so you should consult Natural England for (free) advice if you plan to do anything that might affect the bats or their roost, and that will apply to such activities as renovation, improvement, or even excluding them (fortunately, with a lot more information and understanding around these days, the latter is now a fairly rare event).

Tony Hutson  
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