

Barbastelle (*Barbastella barbastellus*)

Areas and status: A rare bat, patchily distributed in southern and central England and southern Wales.

Woodland type: Lowland Broadleaved Woodland, Wood-pasture and Parkland

Preferred habitat niches: High forest, veteran trees, dead wood, wood-pasture, parkland, closed canopy wet woodland. Typically roosts, breeds and hibernates in tree crevices and cavities, e.g. behind lifted bark. These sites are often in dark, humid areas (e.g. wet woodland and areas with dense shrub layer). The bat forages over large areas, sometimes flying long distances to feed in woodlands, wood-pasture, parklands, over herb-rich meadows and wetlands and alongside hedgerows and tree lines. It has a typical nightly foraging radius of 6km.

Potential habitat management issues associated with decline:

- Loss of roost sites due to over-zealous tidying of woodlands
- Inappropriate management: drainage of wet woodlands, heavy thinning, conversion to wood-pasture, coppicing, etc.
- Loss of linear landscape features (hedges, shelterbelts, rows of riparian trees, etc) linking woodlands to roosting and foraging sites.



©Hugh Clark

Potential habitat management solutions:	
Prescription	Comment
Dead wood	Retain standing and fallen deadwood and where suitable retain surrounding understorey growth.
Minimum intervention	Protect existing/potential roosting sites by retaining dead and dying trees, trees with cracks, loose bark, ivy and/or woodpecker holes, storm-damaged trees. Retain canopy, shrub layer and areas of wet woodland around roosts to maintain dark, humid conditions. Retain areas of dense understorey and closed canopy for foraging
Management	Aim for a full range of age classes of trees with a succession of mature, over-mature and dying trees to provide suitable roosting sites over the longer term. Other activities such as coppicing, conversion to wood-pasture, heavy thinning and group felling should be not carried out near to roosting sites.
Drainage	Partially block ditches and culverts. Create ponds and scrapes in areas of low ecological interest.
Grazing	Control grazing and browsing by livestock and deer to retain good shrub, scrub and field layers and to maintain dark, humid areas.
Connectivity	Manage woodland on landscape-scale to ensure good links with foraging areas and other roosting sites. Protect networks of mature hedgerows, tree lines, woodlands, meadows and wetlands.
Woodland creation (Natural regeneration/colonisation, Native species and Variable density)	Create woodland on areas of low ecological value to enlarge existing woodland, link nearby woods and create additional foraging habitat. Allow natural regeneration or plant a diverse mix of locally native trees and shrubs. If possible, use this opportunity to also create waterlogged areas and wetlands.
Bat boxes	If wood has few existing roosting opportunities, assess the use of bat boxes (consider impacts on other species).



■ Current distribution

Source: Bat Conservation Trust