Bechstein's Bat *(Myotis bechsteinii)*

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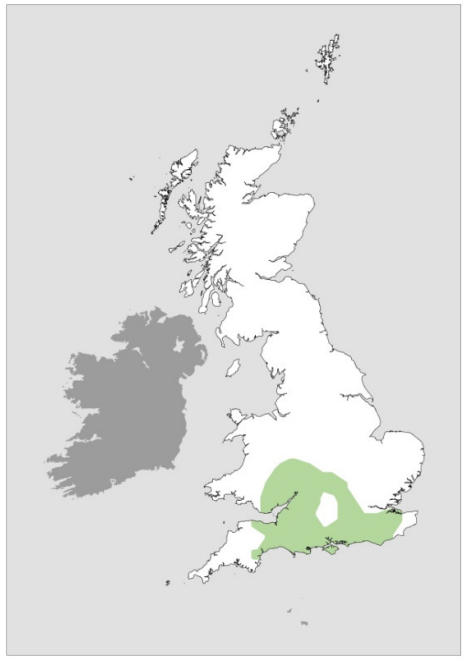
Areas and status: One of Britain's rarest bats, found in Southern England and south Wales (few records).

Woodland type: Lowland Broadleaved Woodland

Preferred habitat niches: High forest, veteran trees, wet woodland and dead wood. Bechstein's bats generally roost, breed and hibernate in tree crevices and cavities. They prefer large, ancient woodlands (>25ha) or a group of well-connected woodlands close to water with closed canopy and dense native understorey. They need landscapes with a good network of linear landscape features and extensive woodlands. The bats predominantly forage within woodlands, often feeding intensively in very small areas close to roosts – typical nightly feeding radius of 1km.

Potential habitat management issues associated with decline:

- Loss of roost sites due to over-zealous tidying of woodlands, opening up of canopy and reduction in understorey
- Drainage of wet woodlands and loss of humid and dark conditions caused by heavy thinning, conversion to wood-pasture, intensive coppicing, etc
- Loss of linear landscape features (hedges, shelterbelts, rows of riparian trees, etc) linking woodland to nearby roosting and foraging sites.
- Loss and fragmentation of woodlands.



Current distribution

Source: Bat Conservation Trust

Potential habitat management solutions:	
Prescription	*Comment*
Deadwood	Retain standing and fallen deadwood and where suitable retain surrounding understorey growth.
Minimal intervention	Protect existing/potential roosting sites by retaining dead and dying trees, trees with cavities, woodpecker holes, storm-damaged trees. Maintain understorey around roosts. In woodland with maternity roost(s), operations such as coppicing, conversion to wood-pasture, heavy thinning, clear-felling and small group felling should only be carried out where necessary and then in restricted patches so as to maintain humidity and low wind speeds within the woodland.
Management	Ensure good structure within wood (good range of tree, shrub, scrub and field layers) but with focus on retaining a high canopy cover (75% or more) and dense, native understorey. 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 Do not carry out operations which create high levels of disturbance within 50m of known roosting sites. If this work is essential, liaise with local Natural England office.
Drainage	If necessary, block off ditches and culverts to retain/enhance wetlands/wet woodland. Create ponds and scrapes in areas of low ecological interest.
Grazing	Control grazing by livestock and deer to retain good shrub, scrub and field layers.
Connectivity	Manage woodland on landscape-scale to ensure good connectivity to foraging areas and roosting sites. Protect networks of mature hedgerows, tree lines, woodlands, meadows and wetlands.
Woodland creation (Native species)	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.
Bat boxes	If wood has few existing roosting opportunities, assess the use of bat boxes (consider impacts on other species).