Common Pipistrelle

Pipistrellus pipistrellus

Introduction

Pipistrelles are the most common and widespread of all British bat species. There are two very similar species, common pipistrelle and soprano pipistrelle. The common and soprano pipistrelle, were only identified as separate species in the 1990s. The easiest way to tell them apart is from the frequency of their echolocation calls. Pipistrelles are the bats that you are most likely to see. They appear fast and jerky in flight as they dodge about pursuing small insects which the bats catch and eat on the wing. A single pipistrelle can consume up to 3,000 insects in one night!

Image (c) Hugh Clark/www.bats.org.uk

Habitats

Common pipistrelles feed in a wide range of habitats comprising woodland, hedgerows, grassland, farmland, suburban and also urban areas. They generally emerge from their roost around 20 minutes after sunset and fly 2 - 10m above ground level searching for their insect prey, which they catch and eat on the wing by 'aerial hawking'.

Summer roosts of both common and soprano pipistrelles are usually found in crevices around the outside of newer buildings between roofing felt and roof tiles or in cavity walls. This species also roosts in tree holes and crevices, and also in bat boxes.

In winter common pipistrelles are found singly or in small numbers in crevices of buildings and trees, and also in bat boxes. They are often found in relatively exposed locations and rarely underground.

Based on materials produced by the Bat Conservation Trust

Worksheet 2

Year 3 Science: animals including humans

THE JERSEY BAT PROJECT

Diet

Feeds mainly on a wide range of small flies as well as the aquatic midges and mosquitos.

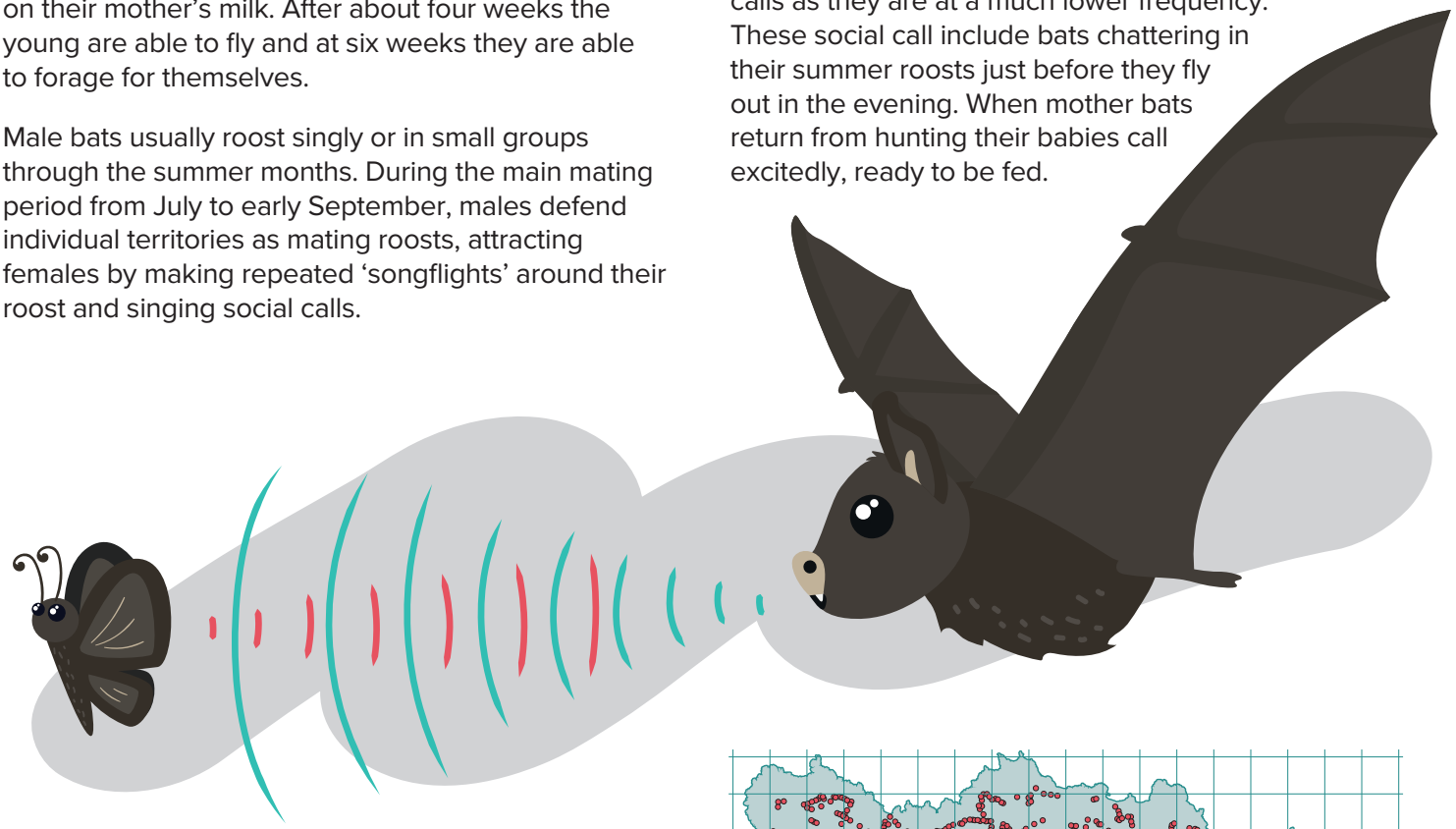
Reproduction & life cycle

During the summer, females form maternity colonies where they give birth to a single young in June or early July. For three or four weeks the young are fed solely on their mother's milk. After about four weeks the young are able to fly and at six weeks they are able to forage for themselves.

Male bats usually roost singly or in small groups through the summer months. During the main mating period from July to early September, males defend individual territories as mating roosts, attracting females by making repeated 'songflights' around their roost and singing social calls.

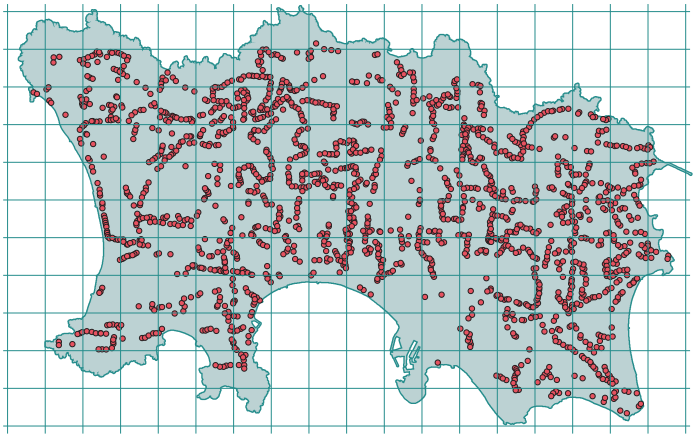
Echolocation

Echolocation is the system our bats use to fly and feed in the dark. They send out click-like calls as they fly, and the returning echoes give them a picture of what is around them, rather like a torch of sound. These calls are strongest at 45kilohertz and are too high-pitched for most of us to hear without a bat detector. But we can hear many of their social calls as they are at a much lower frequency. These social call include bats chattering in their summer roosts just before they fly out in the evening. When mother bats return from hunting their babies call excitedly, ready to be fed.



Distribution & conservation

The common and soprano pipistrelle bats are the most common species in the UK and here in Jersey. They are widely distributed across Jersey. Populations of pipistrelles are threatened as they rely on buildings for roosting, which makes them vulnerable when people renovate a building renovations as they are sometimes excluded or disturbed, especially when works happens in lofts. Also they are badly affected by toxic chemicals used to treat timber. The Department of the Environment screen planning applications to protect bats in Jersey. They ask people to carry out a bat survey and specialist consultants will advise people what measures they can put in to allow bats to continue to use the building safely. Jersey Trees for Life run the Hedgerow Campaign to create natural



feeding and roosting habitats for bats. Learning about bats is really important in helping spread information about the importance of bats. Organisations such as the Jersey Bat Group are key to this and they also monitor our bats to help keep records of how many bats we have, the types of species and where we find them.

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