

In Gas Networks Ireland we love all Ireland’s wildlife and biodiversity. We work with experts like O’Donnell Environmental to make sure that all our sites are biodiversity friendly. You can look after bats and other wildlife in your local area too!

Bat Facts

- Bats are **mammals** (like us). They are **nocturnal**, meaning they only come out at night.
- Bats belong to the mammal category **Chiroptera**, which means “hand wing.” Bats wings are like a human hand except the fingers are long and the skin is stretched between them.
- Irish bats eat insects, so they are **insectivores**. They can eat up to 3,000 midges in a night.
- Bats have very good eyesight, but they mostly use sound to “see”. They send out waves of sound from their mouths or noses, and by listening to the echoes of those sounds, bats can build up a picture of what’s around them. This is called **echolocation**.
- Bats are amazing aerial **acrobats**, they can do somersaults and backflips while flying.
- Bats are most active in spring, summer and autumn. During cold weather bats go into torpor (like **hibernation**).
- Irish bats are small and can weigh as little as 5g – that’s about the same as a €1 coin!
- Bats are very long-lived for their size – they can live up to 40 years!

The nine species of bat most commonly found in Ireland are:

- Common Pipistrelle
- Soprano Pipistrelle
- Nathusius’ Pipistrelle
- Daubenton’s Bat
- Whiskered Bat
- Natterer’s Bat
- Brown Long-eared Bat
- Leisler’s Bat
- Lesser Horseshoe Bat



Brown Long-eared Bat (Photo: Tom O'Donnell)



Lesser Horseshoe Bat (© F. Greenaway)



Using thermal imaging to see bats (Photo: Tom O'Donnell)

How You Can Spot Bats

Bats are active throughout the night in suitable habitat and when the weather allows. Just after sunset can be a good time to spot them, when it's not completely dark yet. In Autumn as the days get shorter, dusk takes place earlier so you won't need to stay up late to see them! Here's how to spot them:

1. Safety first – always go bat spotting with a grown-up.
2. You don't need any special equipment, but if you're going to be outside in the dark then wrap up warm and bring a torch or headlamp so you can see where you're going.
3. Bats love hunting for insects around trees and near water, so head to your garden, a local park, or open space that isn't lit up.
4. Once you are ready to start bat spotting, stay very quiet and turn off outside lights and torches – bats have sensitive hearing so any loud noises might scare them away, and they don't like bright lights either.
5. Find an open spot to look up at the darkening sky. The sounds bats make are high pitched and hard for our ears to notice so you won't really hear them – you'll just need to keep your eyes peeled!

Bats look like fast moving shadows with fluttering wings and they can dart around and change direction a lot. Watch for unusual movements to spot them – they fly very differently to birds. Why not see how many bats you can spot in an hour?

How You Can Help Bats

Bats are cool critters, but they need our help! They face some big challenges like loss of habitat and difficulty finding food, so here's how you can make a difference.

Keep it Wild

Bats LOVE to munch on insects. By letting your lawn grow wild and creating wildflower meadows, you're making a bug buffet for bats. Yum!

Lights Off, Please!

Bats don't like bright lights. They need darkness when they're hunting for their insect snacks so turn off unnecessary lights, especially outdoors. You'll also save energy by using less electricity!

Tree-mendous Homes

Trees are like bat mansions. Planting and protecting trees in your local area will give bats perfect places to hang out.

Bat Box Hangouts

Help our bat buddies find cozy homes. Hang bat boxes up high in areas with lots of trees and hiding spots. Just like us, bats need a comfy place to rest.

By doing these simple things to protect biodiversity, you can be a real superhero for bats, making their lives better and helping them thrive!