

Homes for bats

UK bat species

There are 18 different species of bat in the UK. One of the UK's smallest bat species is a common pipistrelle. It weighs around 5 grams, with an average wingspan of around 20 cm and can fit in a matchbox. Even the UK's largest bat, a noctule, is smaller than most people realise, weighing up to 30 g and an average wingspan of 40 cm.

How to help

Bat populations in the UK have dramatically declined over the last few decades. Largely due to loss of habitat, especially woodland, that provides somewhere for them to roost and feed. But even some of our common species like the common and soprano pipistrelles are vulnerable due to their reliance on buildings for roost sites. If your golf course provides foraging habitat like hedgerows, woodland, wildflower areas and waterbodies that can provide an abundance of insect prey then providing an artificial roost site in the form of a bat box can be a huge help to their recovery.

Building a bat box is easy. Bats may take some time to find and use the box, but will return for many years once adopted as a roost. So be patient and know you are potentially providing a home for generations to come. Bats visit different roost sites throughout the year, according to their needs. They sometimes use a box for only a short period before departing again.



Noctule (L) and Leisler's (R) bats found during bat box checks under licence
© Marie Athorn

Bat populations have declined dramatically over the last few decades. A bat box provides a home for bats for generations to come and can help their recovery.



Brown long-eared bat found during bat box checks under licence © Marie Athorn

Legislation

Remember all UK bat species are protected by law. This does not just protect the bats themselves but any place a bat uses to roost, whether that be a building, a tree or a bat box. So remember once the bat box is up only a licensed bat worker can move or check it so think carefully about where you put your bat boxes.

Bat protection also applies to their tree roosts, if you need to conduct tree felling works make sure you get some expert advice about whether the tree has bat potential. Remember bat roosts are protected whether bats are present or not. Bats use things like woodpecker holes, lifted bark and rot holes as roosts. If a tree has bat potential it will likely require more survey work before the tree can be removed so plan ahead.

Creating a Kent bat box

- Use un-treated, rough-sawn sustainably sourced Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) timber. The wood must be untreated, some preservative chemicals can kill bats.
- You need a plank 15 cm wide, 1.5 cm thick and 140 cm long. You will also need a thick batten 2.5 x 2.5 cm x 130 cm and a thin batten 2.5 x 1.5 cm x 50 cm. See diagram below. **The only critical measurement is the width of the crevices (the battens): between 1.5 cm to 2.5 cm.** Other measurements are approximate.
- Nail the thicker 40 cm battens to each side of the 50 cm plank, and nail the 40 cm plank on top.
- Nail the thin 25 cm onto the 40 cm plank, and nail the 25 cm plank on top of the 25 cm battens.
- Nail the two 15 cm battens at right angles across the back of the 50 cm plank at 2.5 cm from the top and bottom. Finally nail the 25 cm roof on top.

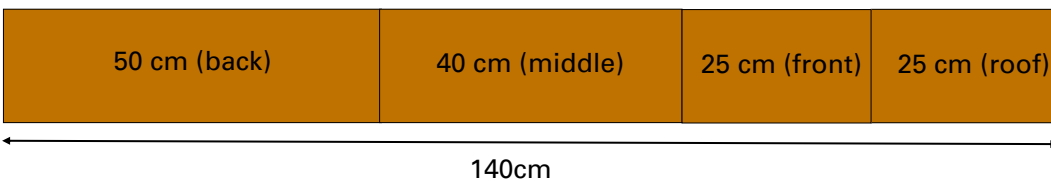


A pipistrelle bat found during bat box checks under licence © Marie Athorn

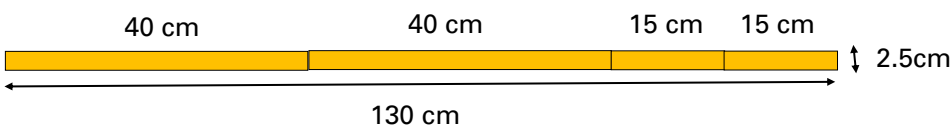
A single bat can eat thousands of insects in a night. They love species like midges and crane flies !

Plan views

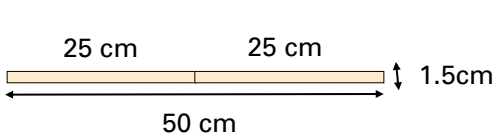
Main board



Thick batten

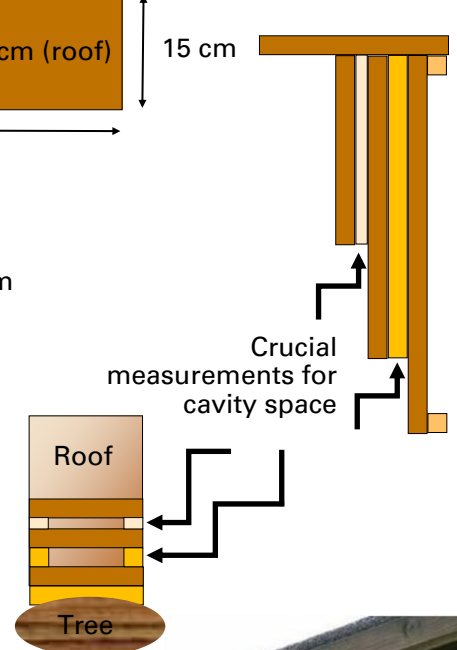


Thin batten



Once you've made your bat box and put it up at your golf club why not take a picture and share on social media. Tag [@marieathorgolf](#) and use [#MoreThanAGolfCourse](#) on twitter!

Profile view



Working together to give nature a home

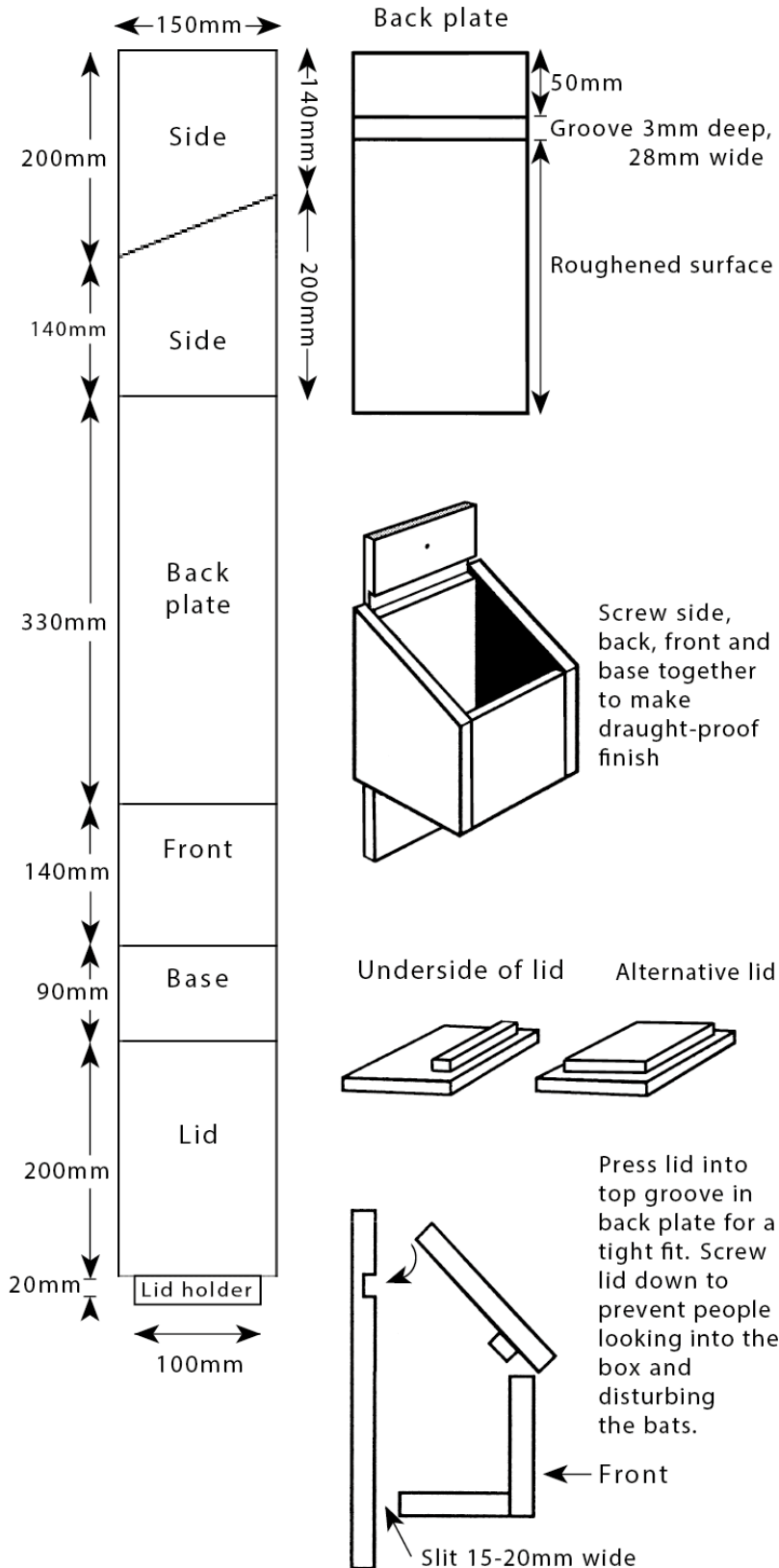


giving
nature
a home



Kent bat box © Kent Bat Group

A square bat box



Brown long-eared bats found during bat box checks under licence © Marie Athorn

Creating a square bat box

- Use un-treated, rough-sawn sustainably sourced Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) timber. The wood must be untreated, some preservative chemicals can kill bats.
- You need a plank 15 cm wide, 1.5 cm thick and 112 cm long.
- Cut the plank into the specified sections in the adjacent diagram and fasten together to create a draught-proof box.
- If you have a licenced bat person who will be able to check the bat boxes don't screw down the lid. But make sure the bat box is at least 3 m off the ground so it cannot be interfered with.

Kent bat boxes are great for species like pipistrelles and more open boxes are preferred by brown long-eared bats and noctules.

Working together to give nature a home



Bat box placement

- On trees, three boxes are ideal. Mount facing north, south-east and south-west. Place at least 3 m high. Attach using wire around the trunk rather than nailing. Pass the wire through a section of hose to prevent damage to the tree.
- If locating on a building place the bat box at least 4 to 5 m up a wall or under eaves, facing any south or westerly direction. Ensure there's a clear flight-path to and from the box and it is away from bright street or security lighting.
- Once bat boxes are up they should not be moved so think carefully about their placement.



Natterer's bat found during bat box checks under licence © Marie Athorn

When will I see bats?

- It can take bats several years to discover a new bat box, patience is key. The best time to look for bats is an hour before and after sunset, so watch and see if there are any leaving the box. Do not open the bat box. Bats are protected by law, and a special licence is required to disturb or handle them.
- If you wish to encourage bats to your golf course then take a look at Bat Conservation Trust tips below to find out how you can create a bat-friendly garden, all the same principles apply to a golf course.

Managing your bat box

- Do not open or move the bat box. Bats are protected by law, and a special licence is required to disturb or handle them. Why not get your local bat group or a licenced bat handler to come and check the bat boxes for you? That way you can find out what species are using them and if any of the fixings need securing they can do that too!
- Bats only come out at night and they are very sensitive to light. Artificial lights should not be directed onto bat boxes as this can be very disturbing for them.

A local bat group could provide a licenced bat person to check your bat boxes. Why not turn it into an engagement event with members where they can learn about bats and other ecology initiatives at the golf club.

Useful links

Find your local bat group: <https://www.bats.org.uk/support-bats/bat-groups>

More information about bat boxes: http://www.bats.org.uk/pages/bat_boxes.html

Bats and trees: <https://cdn.bats.org.uk/pdf/Bats-Trees.pdf>

Bat-friendly garden tips: https://cdn.bats.org.uk/pdf/Resources/Encouraging_Bats.pdf

Tips to managing a woodland: <https://woodlandwildlifetoolkit.sylva.org.uk/home>

Bat legislation: <https://www.bats.org.uk/advice/bats-and-the-law>

More guidance on how to help wildlife on your golf course on The R&A and RSPB partnership webpages: <https://www.randa.org/en/sustainability/services/rspb-partnership>

Contact

A partnership between the R&A and the RSPB exists to address wildlife conservation and the management of natural habitats at golf courses throughout the United Kingdom. If you want any advice relating to nature and wildlife on your golf course contact Dr Marie Athorn on: Marie.Athorn@rspb.org.uk

Working together to give nature a home



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