

One of UK's rarest bats spotted in Wiltshire woods

August 22 2013



A barbastelle in flight. Credit: Dietmar Nill

During a night of bat trapping on Wiltshire Wildlife Trust's Blackmoor Copse nature reserve, Phil Brown, an MSc student at the University of Bristol, identified a barbastelle bat. This is the first confirmed sighting of this elusive and rare species of bat on the reserve.

Working with the Trust's reserve officer, Ashley White, Phil set up traps to discover what species call the woods of Blackmoor Copse home.

Phil Brown said: "It's great to catch a rare bat such as a barbastelle. Every night I go out trapping for [bats](#) I'm excited by what I could potentially catch. At Blackmoor Copse I was particularly hopeful, as while I was walking around the woodland in the day I found some areas of old oak woodland with ideal locations to set up my traps. I had high hopes and wasn't disappointed!"

Dr Carol Williams, Director of Conservation at the Bat Conservation Trust said: "Barbastelle bats are very rare, with few breeding roosts currently known in the UK. It is fantastic that Phil's research, which is supported by Bat Conservation Trust, has added a valuable piece to the jigsaw in mapping their distribution. Now we know barbastelle are in the Copse it is more important than ever that the Wiltshire Wildlife Trust keeps up the good work in the management of this and the surrounding landscape to benefit this rare bat and other species."

Classified as Vulnerable by the 2000 IUCN Red List, barbastelles are identified by their long white-tipped, dark-brown fur which gives them an almost frosty look. They typically live in [wooded areas](#) near water. These skilled hunters will emerge as the sun sets and hunt for moths and flies.

Ashley White said: "The sighting of a barbastelle tells us that the woodland is well-managed so it is really good news for the Trust. Through the summer, these bats will roost in trees and the bat boxes placed in the woods by the Trust, and will occasionally also roost in crevices in buildings. As summer fades into autumn, barbastelles will be mating and, fingers crossed, next summer Blackmoor Copse will have a new generation of barbastelles!"

Phil Brown added: "The barbastelle was a great catch and record but we also caught two other bats of interest. My research is focussing on finding a species of bat called the Alcathoe bat that was only described as a species new to science as recently as 2001 and has only been confirmed in the UK since 2011. It looks very similar to two other known British species the Brandt's and Whiskered bats so the only way to get an accurate positive identification is through DNA analysis.

"As well as the barbastelle record we also caught two bats which are either Brandt's, Whiskered or Alcathoe, but we'll have to wait until I've

done the DNA analysis to find out exactly what they are. Watch this space Wiltshire!"

Provided by University of Bristol

Citation: One of UK's rarest bats spotted in Wiltshire woods (2013, August 22) retrieved 22 May 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2013-08-uk-rarest-wiltshire-woods.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.