

Lone male bat rewrites the record books

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Two Bechstein's bats (*Myotis bechsteinii*) on moss. Photo by © Hugh Clark/Bat Conservation Trust

(PhysOrg.com) -- One of the rarest bats in the UK - the Bechstein's bat (*Myotis bechsteinii*) - has been found at its most westerly site ever recorded in the UK by a PhD student at the University of Bristol.

Discovered on National Trust land at the Colby estate in south west Wales, the lone male bat was found more than 60 miles west of the nearest recorded site in the Brecon Beacons.

The bat was captured by Matt Zeale from the University's School of Biological Sciences while researching another rare bat, the barbastelle, which has also been recorded on this site for the first time. This research is being carried out in partnership with the Countryside Council for Wales.

A Bechstein's bat will often prove elusive as it has a quiet echolocation

call that can easily be missed using the usual methods of surveying with a bat detector. The bat was caught using an Autobat which emits social calls, designed to attract [bats](#) to a 'harp trap', from which they can be taken for identification and then released unharmed.

Normally resident in southern England more information on these rarest of bats has only recently come to light and very little was known about their distribution. There are thought to be around 1,500 individuals in the UK.

Dr. David Bullock, Head of Nature Conservation at the National Trust, said: "We can only speculate where this male Bechstein's bat might have come from. He either made an incredible journey from the [Forest of Dean](#) or Herefordshire or more likely there are other roosting sites waiting to be discovered in Pembrokeshire."

Bechstein's bats normally live in ancient woodlands. During the summer they roost in tree holes and in the winter they hibernate in tree holes, cellars and tunnels. The bat normally feeds on invertebrates such as spiders and also day-flying insects that are resting on branches and leaves.

The National Trust's Colby estate in south Pembrokeshire is a beautiful wooded valley that runs inland from the coast.

Matt Zeale, the research student at the University of Bristol who found the bat during his survey work, said: "Coming across this lone male Bechstein's bat was a real surprise. The woodland at Colby is the right habitat for this rare bat but it's remarkable to find it so far west of its previously recorded site."

Provided by University of Bristol ([news](#) : [web](#))

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