

Some bat numbers up in Britain

31 December 2006

At least four species of bats in Britain have reversed decades of declining populations and have grown in numbers recently.

The island nation is home to 17 species of bats, and loss of habitat, changes in farming techniques and public fear of the flying mammals had caused sharp declines, in some cases to near-extinction, The Independent said.

The Bat Conservation Trust has been working to improve the bats' image through public education, puncturing myths that they are blood suckers or blind flyers who get tangled in women's hair. The trust runs a hot line for homeowners who find they are also providing a bat roost, the report said.

The four bats with rising numbers are the lesser horseshoe bat, Daubenton's bat, Natterer's bat and the pipistrelle bat.

The lesser horseshoe bat has a range that includes Wales, western England and western Ireland. Daubenton's bat, which lives throughout Britain, has big feet that allow it to catch water insects. Natterer's bat is rare, while the pipistrelle bat is the most common bat in Britain.

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