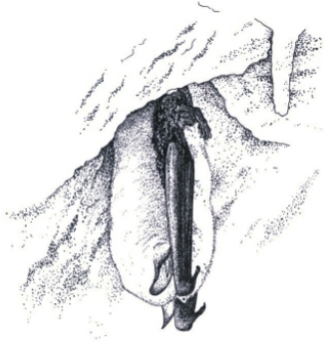


Bats underground in the Yorkshire Dales - a conservation code for cavers



*Hibernating
Natterer's bat*

N.B. Both the British Caving Association (BCA) and the Bat Conservation Trust (BCT) publish conservation codes. This document does NOT replace them, but summarises the key points from a Yorkshire Dales perspective. The BCT's *Bats Underground - A Conservation Code* can be downloaded from the BCT and BCA websites (www.bats.org.uk and www.british-caving.org.uk). The BCA's *Minimal Impact Caving Code* is currently under review.

Bats and cavers

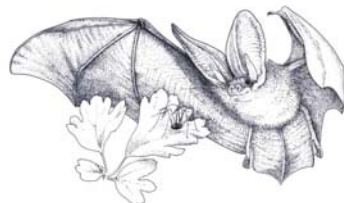
Many cavers in the Dales see the occasional bat underground, but only the older generations of cavers recall seeing bats in any numbers. We know that some species are declining nationally due to loss of feeding habitat and loss or disturbance to nursery roosts. We have no information on changes in the number of bats using underground sites in the Dales. However, recent research suggests that many more bats use underground sites in the Dales than was previously suspected. Interestingly, some of the more important sites are caves opened up by cavers in the last 50 years.



Hibernating brown long-eared bat

Dales bats

Fives of the region's nine species of bat use underground sites: brown long-eared, Natterer's, Daubenton's, Brandt's and whiskered bats. All five hibernate underground, typically from November to April, but most hide away in crevices, singly or in small groups, so are often overlooked. All may use caves and mines from April to October as night roosts when feeding or as temporary day roosts during bad weather, but numbers are typically low. On autumn nights (August to October) hundreds of bats can 'swarm' at cave/mine entrances and below ground, with males competing to attract females and mate.



Brown long-eared bat

Code of practice

Cavers can help to conserve bats by minimising disturbance, allowing bats free access to caves and providing sightings. Specifically:

- Do not handle bats. Beware of dislodging roosting bats, particularly when you are moving through low passages.
- Do not wake torpid bats:
 - Do not use flashguns if bats are present.
 - Do not linger in confined spaces, your body heat is sufficient to cause arousal.
 - Do not shine bright lights on bats
 - The use of carbide lamps is particularly undesirable because of the heat and fumes that they produce.
 - Any strong stimulus can arouse bats so avoid smoking or making excessive noise.
- Avoid large parties, especially in winter.
- Avoid evening rescue practices in August and September at known swarming sites.
- Where possible fit gates which allow bats to fly in and out freely - ideally one or more holes 150 mm x 450 mm.
- Seek advice before digging or blasting. Remember to consult with your SNCO before undertaking any activities.

Useful contacts:

Local

Natural England, Asquith House, Leyburn Business Park, Harmby Road, Leyburn, North Yorkshire, DL8 5QA
Tel: 01969 623447. Email: Leyburn@naturalengland.org.uk
Website: www.naturalengland.org.uk

Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority, Colvend, Grassington, Skipton, North Yorkshire, BD23 5LB.
Tel: 0870 1 666333. Email: info@yorkshiredales.org.uk
Website: www.yorkshiredales.org

National

British Caving Association (BCA) & British Cave Research Association (BCRA), Old Methodist Chapel, Great Hucklow, Buxton, Derbyshire, SK17 8RG www.british-caving.org.uk & www.bcra.org.uk

National Association of Mining History Organisations (NAMHO), c/o Peak District Mining Museum, The Pavilion, Matlock Bath, Derbyshire DE4 3PS www.namho.org

