

Bat Boxes

Biodiversity Specification #4



This specification details how to install and maintain different types of bat boxes. Please refer to your planning consent to determine which parts of this document are relevant to your site and how many boxes are required.

Eighteen species of bat are native to the UK. Bat boxes provide locations for many species to rest during the day and may allow bats to live in areas where there are few alternative roosting sites. We always recommend boxes which allow droppings to fall out to reduce maintenance requirements.

There are three main types of bat box:

I. Integrated Bat Boxes

Also known as “build-in boxes”, these are discrete boxes which are built into a new structure. These permanent additions are incorporated into the brickwork and in some cases may be rendered or painted with breathable paints (check manufacturer guidance).



Integrated bat boxes - photo credit BCT

Location

- On a sunny elevation, ideally facing Southwards
- At least 3m above ground and with the entrance at least 0.5m away from the eaves, branches or ledges to reduce predation risk
- In a dark location, away from any sources of artificial light. Entrances must be at least 2m away from windows or 5m from external lights

Design

A range of integrated bat boxes are available. Select a model which can be successfully incorporated into your build.

Installation

Install in accordance with the manufacturer's guidance. The entrance must be clear of construction debris.

Maintenance

Generally none required. Boxes which do not allow droppings to fall away should be cleaned regularly by a licensed ecologist.



External mounted bat box - photo credit BCT

2. Externally Mounted Boxes

A simple bat box which is mounted on the surface of a building using screws. A range of sizes and styles are available to suit different species and roost types.

Location

- On a sunny elevation, ideally facing Southwards
- At least 3m above ground and with the entrance at least 0.5m away from the eaves, branches or ledges to reduce predation risk
- In a dark location, away from any sources of artificial light. Entrances must be at least 2m away from windows or 5m from external lights



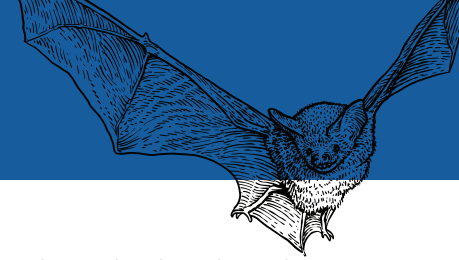
External mounted bat box - photo credit BCT

Design

Select a commercially available bat box constructed from WoodStone, Woodcrete or a similar blend to ensure durability. Wooden boxes are not suitable.

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Installation

Install in accordance with the manufacturer's guidance.

Maintenance

Boxes which do not allow droppings to fall away should be cleaned regularly by a licensed ecologist.

3. Tree-mounted Bat Boxes

Similar to the above, but extra consideration needs to be given to whether the tree is capable of supporting the weight of the box.

Location

- In a sunny location, ideally facing Southwards. If erecting boxes on a deciduous tree in Winter, consider whether leaves would be likely to cause significant shading
- At least 3m above ground and with the entrance at least 0.5m away from branches to reduce predation risk and allow easy access for bats
- In a dark location, away from any sources of artificial light. Entrances must be at least 5m away from external lights

Design

Select a commercially available bat box constructed from WoodStone, Woodcrete or a similar blend to ensure durability. Wooden boxes are not suitable.



Installation

Install using aluminium nails or a strap. It may be necessary to get a licensed ecologist to adjust the fixing every few years as the tree grows.

When placing several boxes on one tree, orientate them slightly differently (i.e. South-East and South-West) to allow bats to choose the best roost location.

Maintenance

Boxes which do not allow droppings to fall away should be cleaned regularly by a licensed ecologist.

Manage vegetation as required to ensure that the box will receive sunlight. Boxes which are shaded are likely to be too cold for use by bats.

What next?

Once you have placed your bat box, leave it undisturbed. You may spot bats leaving the boxes on summer evenings, but it can take a while for bats to start using a new box. If you enjoy watching your bats, you could register your box with the National Bat Roost Monitoring Programme.

Important!

All British bats are afforded full protection under the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 and the Conservation of Species and Habitats Regulations 2017. This means that it is a criminal offence to disturb a bat or destroy an active bat roost. If you need to open or move your bat box, contact a licensed ecologist.

Bat-Friendly Lighting

Some bats avoid bright light. Refer to “**Biodiversity Specification #5 External Lighting**” for further information on choosing bat-friendly outdoor lighting.

Learn More

The Bat Conservation Trust have a range of resources including information on living with bats and how to get in touch with your local bat group.