



Investigator's Guide to Bats

Aide Memoire

August 2016

This aide memoire will provide a brief understanding of the law and process when investigating offences relating to bats. It also provides links to further information.

- All species of bats found in the wild in the UK are [protected by law](#). It is normally an offence to kill, injure or take bats or to disturb them. There is an absolute offence of damaging or destroying breeding and resting places of bats (roosts).
- There are other animal welfare and trade offences that are applicable to bats.
- The main offences relating to bats have penalties of up to six months imprisonment and/or an unlimited fine. Most offences are summary only.
- Prosecutions should be initiated within 6 months of sufficient evidence being available to charge (in the view of the prosecutor). Proceedings must commence within 2 years of an offence being committed.
- Some non-UK species of bat are protected from sale, advertisement for sale, display for commercial use, etc.
- Offences committed against bats are the responsibility of the police to investigate (the only exception being where a Licence has been issued by Natural England, the English Government's statutory wildlife body, and that Licence has been breached. Natural England may enforce these cases – contact species.enforcement@naturalengland.org.uk).
- Any report of a suspected offence against bats should be recorded by call handlers and allocated for further investigation.
- Where possible before commencing enquiries seek advice from a Force Wildlife Crime Officer or from the [National Wildlife Crime Unit Investigation Support Officers](#).
- A constables has the power to [enter land](#), take [samples](#), [search](#), etc. in relation to bat offences. This power enables them to take others with them to assist in their investigations.
- **DO NOT HANDLE BATS** - [there is a potential risk from Rabies](#).

Investigator's Guide to Bats

- Officers should be mindful of [licensing requirements](#) when carrying out their enquiries.
- Consider the need for [expert assistance](#) in relation to any site/scene visit. Consider Health and Safety aspects of the investigation that might apply to your enquiries/investigation – access to sites (buildings being renovated/demolished, building sites, lofts). See [Scene](#) and refer to force risk assessments.
- Consider the possibility of forensic opportunities during any site visit/investigation. Photographic (stills and video/body camera) evidence is likely to prove crucial in relation to proving offences.

For further information see the [POLKA Wildlife Crime Community](#) and supporting material (this link is available to authorised users who are logged on to POLKA).

© – College of Policing Limited (2016)

This publication is licensed under the terms of the Non-Commercial College Licence v1.1 except where otherwise stated. To view this licence visit http://www.college.police.uk/Legal/Documents/Non_Commercial_College_Licence.pdf

Where we have identified any third-party copyright information, you will need to obtain permission from the copyright holders concerned.