

What to do if you find a grounded bat



Sometimes a grounded bat may just be exhausted and need a bit of time to recover with a little help.

It may be injured or in danger from passing cats so it is better to take it into captivity temporarily.

Place a box (which should be shoebox or ice cream tub sized) over the bat and slide a piece of cardboard under the box to make the floor of the container. If this is not practical then put on a pair of protective gloves and pick up the bat and put it in the box.

Bats are not vicious, but a frightened wild animal may become distressed.

Put a piece of cloth such as an old tea towel loosely crumpled in one corner of the box. The bat will feel safer if it has something to crawl into and hide. Put a few small air holes into the lid and a very shallow container (such as a plastic milk bottle top) of water in one corner so the bat can have a drink.

Instructions for release

Always wear gloves to handle bats.

Place the box on its side, so the bat can crawl straight out. Bats need to drop and swoop to become airborne so the box should be on the top of a wall or on a shed roof, at least five feet off the ground, (but not from the top of a tall building in case it can't fly) as near as possible to where the bat was found. The bat can then crawl out of the box and fly away when it is ready. If the bat does not fly away within about fifteen minutes it might need further attention, so take it back inside. You may have a bat carer in your area (phone The Bat Conservation Trust on 0845 1300 228 to find out); if not, take the bat to the vet the following morning. If you pass the bat on to a

bat carer it is important also to pass on details of who found the bat, where and in what circumstances it was found. Vets should be provided with the same information so the bats can be returned to where they were caught. This is important as female bats are highly social animals and bats often have specific territories.

How can I tell if it is a new born bat or an adult?

This is not a silly question. Adult bats can seem very small to us. The bats you are most likely to encounter are pipistrelles. The one in the photo below is full grown.



Photo Bob Cornes

Its body length is about the width of two fingers.



Photo Daniel Hargreaves

A new born bat is tiny hairless, helpless and blind. Initially it is pink and like a plucked chicken in appearance. Young pups have that unco-ordinated floppiness that new born humans have.



Photo Irene Sabiniarz



The same bat two days later.

Photo Jude Hirstwood



This is the same bat four days later,

Photo Jude Hirstwood



This is another youngster.

Photo Jo Matthews

What do I do with a new born bat?

The best outcome for the youngster is to be reunited with its mother.

If you think it is a new born bat and you know that there is a roost in your roof, then keep the bat contained. There may be a bat carer near you. Call the National Bat Helpline on 0845 1300 228 to find out.

Keep the baby bat hydrated by offering it water on the end of a fine clean paintbrush (young bats can inhale cotton from cotton buds and this can cause problems) (you should always wear gloves if you need to handle a bat). Leave it somewhere warm (like an airing cupboard) as young animals lose heat very quickly. (A heat pad under a tea towel does the trick) When it gets dark take the bat in the box outside and leave the bat somewhere where the bats exiting from the roost will go past it, for example on the wall beneath the roost, a nearby window sill or the branch of a tree. The mother will be looking for the baby and so the closer you can get it to where the bats exit then the higher the chances of the two being reunited. If you can stay nearby in case a passing cat things it has spotted a light snack, but not so close that you scare the mother, and seeing mum and bay reunited is quite magical.

If you have any concerns, call the National Bat Helpline on 0845 1300 228. They can pass details on to us if you are in Bedfordshire, or to other Bat Groups elsewhere.

Please note that all our bat care team are unpaid volunteers and are usually at work during the day and may have other commitments.