



*Championing UK's most special species:  
the wildlife of UK's Overseas Territories (UKOTs) and  
Crown Dependencies (CDs)*

FACT-SHEET ON:

**Grey Long-eared Bat *Plecotus austriacus***  
**Crown Dependency: Jersey**

The Grey Long-eared Bat is a fairly large European bat species, confined to only a few areas in the South of England, but is a common resident in Jersey. These bats have similarities with the Brown Long-eared Bat *Plecotus auritus*, but have different ecological requirements. They have been affectionately named the 'whispering bat' due to their quiet echolocation calls; they have particularly low-frequency hearing. They feed on moths, but also beetles and flies. They mate in September to November, and give birth to a single young late June to July. They are fully weaned by 6 weeks.

**Importance:** Although quite widespread throughout Europe, this species is rarely seen in the UK, and is thought to be close to extinction. One explanation for this is the loss of foraging habitat. Jersey's population is important as it is at the most northerly edge of its range. In most countries where it is found, it is protected under local legislation. In the UK, it is protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act, 1981. In the European Union, it is a Protected Species under Annex IV of the European Habitats Directive. On Jersey, there is legislation to protect bats and their roosts.

**Ecosystem:** Habitats they are usually associated with are open meadows and pastures, as well as woodland. They are gleaners and pick insects up off any substrate, whether leaves or bark or mid-flight. Older buildings are their preferred roosting locations. The local conservation group, Jersey Bats, conducts research and leads conservation efforts. The Group notes that these bats can often be seen using feeding perches to rest and, while doing so, they often curl their ears back or tuck them under their wings. During summer months, the bats tend to use tree-roosts and have a smaller feeding range. In winter, when they hibernate, they roost in tree and hollow walls, with small numbers in caves and tunnels.

**Threats:** Loss or fragmentation of suitable foraging habitat connected to favourable roosting sites has led to a decline of this species in the UK. Despite legislation in Jersey, the cumulative impacts of built development and habitat-loss over time threaten its survival. Protection measures must be implemented and space must be made for them within a changing landscape. Pressure for housing on a densely populated island means that new buildings are required. Unless legal protection is put in place, these modern housing developments, and converted old buildings, are built without provision for the bats' requirements. Over time, unless addressed, this is inevitably going to impact on the species' survival on Jersey.



*Above: Grey Long-eared Bat, © Vikki Robertson, Jersey Bats.  
Below: Grey Long-eared and Brown Long-eared Bats,  
© States of Jersey*



**Needs:** The bats' close association with land used for agriculture means that, by encouraging bats in a farmed landscape, there could be direct benefits for the wider farming community, particularly in pest-control. As the bats' requirements are specific, there is a need to protect old buildings with large roof-spaces and also the surrounding open spaces where the bats forage. There is a need also to increase knowledge and understanding of maternity roosts and hibernation sites, which need to be monitored and protected.