

ARBORETUM BATS

Bat Walk Friday 24th April 2026

Organised by Anne Hudson

Guest expert: Nic Foulks, Northumberland Bat Group

[Home - Northumberland Bat Group](#)

Nic started the evening explaining that the conditions were very good. A cold start to a hot day. This both increases the number of insects flying in the warm evening, plus bats are keen to eat as much as possible before the night rapidly cools.

We were given bat detectors and shown how to use them. Bats echolocate at a very high pitch sound. The detectors convert bat sound frequencies to a level we can hear. During daylight bats call to each other at lower frequencies as they have good eyesight to see insects just before dusk. Children and young adults can still hear some of the lower frequency sounds bats make.

Almost immediately we picked up sounds of Pippistrelle bats (our most common species). We walked along tree lined paths identifying different bats while still able to see them. Nic explained the best frequencies to identify different species.

Nic explained that large groups of bats will slightly alter their echolocation frequency so they don't interfere with each other's feeding. They also make short social calls to each other as they feed.

When it got dark we moved to the riverside. Here bats were gathering in greater numbers. Lights from either side of the bridge attracted insects encouraging bats closer to us. Some bats circled c2 meters above the river, while others skimmed the surface. This showed different species have different appetites and specialisms of feeding. We shone torches across the river to see bats as well as hear them.

As the temperature cooled, fewer bats were found. Our cue to ending a very successful evening.

Bat facts

- Bats hibernate during the winter when the insects that they eat aren't around. However, if the temperature rises and insects are flying, they may come out of hibernation to feed.
- Bats will roost in caves, buildings, trees, brick walls, cliffs etc. Some species have specialist habitats.

- The most common bat in Northumberland is the Pipistrelle, (both the common pipistrelle and soprano pipistrelles)
- Bats mate in autumn. The females can retain their eggs in a dormant state until late April /early May. If there is insufficient food, they reabsorb the eggs. Thus only starting gestation when adequate insects are around to sustain mother and baby. Babies cling to their mother for 4 weeks, then fly behind the mum learning feeding areas for a further 4 weeks.
- Bats can live in the wild for up to 15 -20 years
- Bats can eat over 3000 midges a night!

Bats detected:

- Pipistrelle
- Soprano pipistrelle
- Noctule
- Daubentons (*Myotis daubentonii*)