

Back from the Brink – Species summary

Grey Long-eared Bat

BftB project: IPO4 Limestone’s Living Legacies

Project lead organisation: Butterfly Conservation

Contact: info@butterfly-conservation.org

Partner organisation for species: Bat Conservation Trust

Species name – common & scientific	Grey Long-eared Bat <i>Plecotus austriacus</i>
Photograph	 <p>© Hugh Clark (BCT) / Back from the Brink</p>
Taxon group	Mammalia, Chiroptera (bats)
Conservation status	IUCN least concern. EU Habitats Directive Annex IV
UK distribution	A native UK species, there are very few confirmed records, most of which are from areas close to the coast in lowland areas of southern England from Sussex to Devon through to Somerset. Found on the Isle of Wight and the Channel Islands.
Habitat associations	Research suggests that this species’ range will shift northwards in response to a changing climate. Strongly associated with human settlements with a high proportion of grassland, hedges, and trees on the continent, in the UK it has mostly been associated with wet and species rich meadows, a highly fragmented habitat.
BftB work carried out:	
Survey & Monitoring	Initially accepted as not being present in the Cotswolds, therefore project work aimed to ‘future-proof’ in anticipation of range expansion. However, analysis of Audiomoth recordings from our winter monitoring for Greater Horseshoe Bats found a possible Grey Long-eared Bat call. Work followed to determine if the species was present in spring/summer 2021 by deploying Audiomoths at the site where the sound had been recorded. Data then sent back to Bat Conservation Trust for analysis.

Sites habitat management works	Accepted as not being present in the Cotswolds yet, so all practical habitat management work to restore insect-rich limestone grassland is providing suitable foraging habitat for this species to move into as its range expands northwards.
Technical advice provision	Site advice to landowners of a number of sites on limestone grassland management that will benefit the Grey Long-eared Bat when it reaches the Cotswolds.
Links made with other taxa / conservation work?	A possible Grey Long-eared Bat call was identified through survey work using Audiomoths for the Greater Horseshoe Bat. Ongoing efforts to restore limestone grasslands for other target species will benefit the Grey Long-eared Bat for when it reaches the Cotswolds.
Wider engagement & advocacy activities?	A number of landowner workshops have been delivered jointly with other BftB partners covering multiple species groups including bats and touching on the needs of Grey Long-eared Bats.
BftB results obtained:	
Recorded Distribution (in BftB focal areas)	No records of Grey Long-eared Bat were made until a <i>possible</i> Grey Long-eared Bat call was identified from Bat Conservation Trust analysis of Audiomoth data collected during survey work for Greater Horseshoe Bats over winter 2019-2020. Audiomoths have been re-deployed to this site over spring/summer 2021 to try and confirm the presence of this species.
Recommendations for future work:-	Continued efforts to restore insect-rich limestone grassland in order to provide suitable foraging habitat for when the Grey Long-eared Bat expands its range northwards into the Cotswolds.

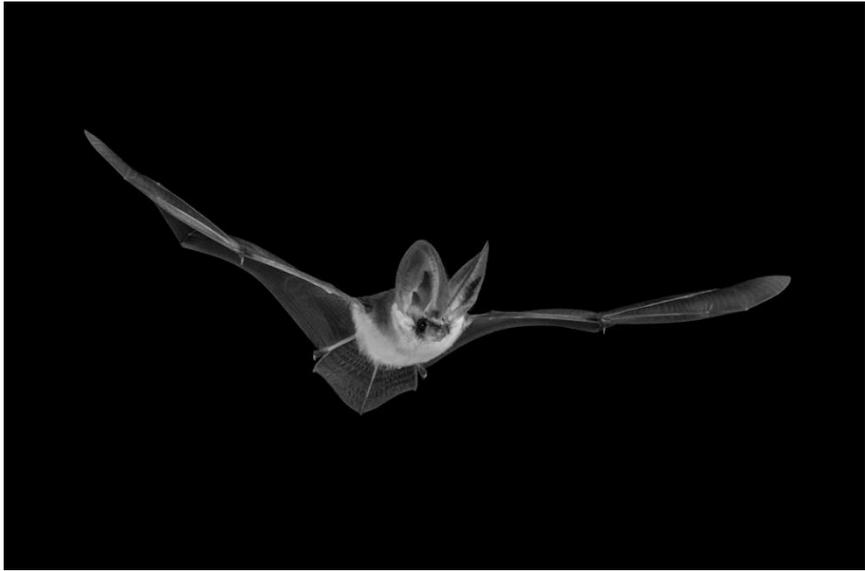
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Grey Long-eared Bat

BftB project: SP03 – Grey Long-eared Bat Species Recovery Project

Project lead organisation: Bat Conservation Trust

Contact: enquiries@bats.org.uk

Species name – common & scientific	Grey long-eared bat (<i>Plecotus austriacus</i>)
Photograph	 <p>© Neil Aldridge / Back from the Brink</p>
Taxon group	Chiroptera
Conservation status	Near threatened and nationally rare
UK distribution	Devon, Dorset, Somerset, Hampshire, Isle of Wight, Sussex
Habitat associations	Unimproved grassland, riparian vegetation, broadleaved woodland, hedgerows
BftB work carried out:	
Survey & Monitoring	Monitoring carried out at 7 roost sites (5 registered with NBMP, 2 requested) by project end (2021). Bat activity surveys carried out over 2 years at 2 habitat restoration sites (2018/19, 2019/20).
Sites habitat management works	80ha of grassland restoration and/or management changes carried out throughout the project area over 30 sites.
Technical advice provision	Species information and habitat requirements provided to over 200 landowners and land managers as well as bespoke advice for grassland restoration sites and for Countryside Stewardship applications. This guidance is now available on the BCT website. Species identification guide developed and provided to local authorities and ecological consultants – also available on the website.

Links made with other taxa / conservation work?	Links made with RSPB work on Cirl buntings in the area, as well as linked up advice and landowner engagement with the Devon Greater Horseshoe Bat Project. Also working with National Trust and RSPB on habitat restoration.
Wider engagement & advocacy activities?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 60+ community engagement events • 80+ volunteers trained/engaged • Schools pack on GLEB and grassland restoration
BftB results obtained:	
Recorded Distribution (in BftB focal areas)	7 main roosts plus numerous low numbers/single records throughout the project area and beyond.
Recorded Abundance of species populations	Abundance cannot be effectively counted with current datasets. Most roosts show very low numbers (1-6) with little historical comparison. More established roost records seem to show historical fluctuations but currently in decline.
Species Recovery Curve progress made	Step 5, pressures (habitat loss and fragmentation) and remedial action (habitat restoration) have been identified. Other drivers of decline are not addressed by this project. Step 6 (recovery solutions trialled) are being carried out within the project area (grassland restoration). (Extract from final report).
Recommendations for future work:-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continued grassland restoration and landowner engagement to the levels set out for FCS • Integration of grassland restoration for target species (GLE) into ELMS • Continued and expanded monitoring of GLE roosts • Continued work with local authorities, planners and ecological consultants to ensure GLE needs are met • Data analysis and continued/long term monitoring of habitat restoration sites

