

## Soprano Pipistrelle

### Description

Bats are the only true flying mammals and here in Northern Ireland there are eight species. All of our bats are insectivorous; they only eat insects. Although bats have good eyesight, they use an ultrasound sonar echolocation to build up a 'sound picture' of their environment and prey.

Pipistrelles are the commonest and most widespread species and are the bats that you are most likely to see. They appear fast and jerky in flight as they dodge about pursuing insects which they catch and eat on the wing. A single pipistrelle can consume over 3,000 insects in one night making them nature's best pest controllers! They feed on a variety of insects including small moths, midges, mosquitoes and lacewings.

The fur of the soprano pipistrelle is medium to dark brown. The face and around the eyes is usually pink in colour. It measures 35–45mm from nose to tail with the wingspan from 180mm-240mm.



Mating generally takes place in autumn at mating roosts, just before hibernation which lasts for four to five months. Maternity roosts are formed by the females from May onwards and a single baby is usually produced between June and mid-July. This baby feeds solely on its mother's milk for about six weeks at which stage it starts to forage for itself and becomes totally independent.

### Distribution

Pipistrelles have been recorded in parks, gardens and woodland across Northern Ireland. Pipistrelles leave their roosts just before sunset and can be seen searching for insects above hedges and around trees at head height up to canopy height. They do not like flying in open exposed areas as this leaves them vulnerable to predation. They feed along water edges, woodland edges and gardens.

### Action

UK species action plan for *Pipistrellus pygmaeus* which was published in 1995.

The Northern Ireland Bat Group and CEDaR collates records for this species

Populations monitored through the annual car transect monitoring scheme implemented by Bat Conservation Ireland.

Implementation of the Northern Ireland Habitat Action Plan for Species Rich Hedgerows and the Woodland Habitat Action Plans.

### Further Information

<http://www.habitas.org.uk/priority/species.asp?item=40199>

### MLA Species Champion

