

A close-up of a Bechstein bat

Often viewed as creepy and with a long-standing reputation for being bloodsuckers bats are one of the UK's most underrated species. However, the Tees Valley Wildlife Trust is starting an exciting project to change all that.

So, if you're a bat fan you'll want to head to the Batscape project that is about to get underway. Run by The Tees Valley Wildlife Trust, this project will ensure East Cleveland is a better place for bats to live and thrive. However old you are, it's guaranteed to be an enjoyable learning experience with walks, talks, specific bat events and school visits. You'll even have the opportunity to interact with the bats, appreciating their ecological importance. For example, did you know that:

- Bats eat thousands of mosquitos and crop destroying insects in an evening
- Large fruit bats spread seeds throughout the rainforest helping to plant new growth
- Bat stool (guano) is the best plant fertilizer
- Some bats carry a substance in their saliva that is used in medicine

With over 1,000 bat species across the world, East Cleveland aims to help protect at least 8 different species, including some of the rarer bats, which will be cared for by trained professionals. We are lucky enough to have a whopping 18 species of bat in the UK, 17 of which are known to be breeding here. Our resident species, include: Alcathoe bat, Barbastelle, Bechstein's bat, Brandt's bat, Brown long-eared bat, Greater Horseshoe bat, Natterer's bat, and the

Whiskered bat. This project has been made possible through a grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF).

[quote=Ivor Crowther, Head of HLF North East]"Whilst not always considered to be the cutest of animals, bats are a vital part of our ecosystem."[/quote]

Ivor Crowther, Head of HLF North East region, said: “Whilst not always considered to be the cutest of animals, bats are a vital part of our ecosystem and their declining numbers flag up an urgent need to understand them better and share that knowledge with local communities in order to protect them. We’re sure The Tees Valley Wildlife Trust project will be a great success and the long-term conservation of bats and their habitats in East Cleveland will be much improved.”



Long-eared brown bat Hugh Clark/Bat Conservation Trust

Tees Valley Wildlife Trust wins Heritage Lottery Fund support for regional bat project