

About *greater mouse-eared bat*

The **greater mouse-eared bat** (*Myotis myotis*) is one of 28 bat species living in Slovenia and one of the most endangered ones.

- This bat is the largest representative of its genus in Europe but still weighs only **30 grams**. In flight, they appear quite large with the **span of their wings** exceeding **40 centimeters**.
- The oldest known age of a greater mouse-eared bat is **37 years**.
- In summer, a number of **female bats** form a **nursery colony**. In late May or in June, a female bat has one offspring, which weighs only five grams when it is born.
- **Male bats** are usually **loners** and only seek female company in autumn, when they can create a harem with several females.
- In summer, their favorite shelters are **attics and church towers**. Unfortunately, they are often violently persecuted there.

Each year, **people destroy** at least one summer roost of greater mouse-eared bats in Slovenia. The shelters are usually taken from females with young, therefore the status of this species in Slovenia is alarming.

By acting this way, we are **losing a great nature's treasure**, which our descendants may never be able to know.



The role of bats in the environment is very important because they **regulate the number of insects**. They also eat insects we think of as pests. Bats faeces – guano – is appreciated as an excellent natural fertilizer around the world.

Let us know if you share your home or neighborhood with bats and contribute to a better understanding of the distribution of bats in Slovenia.

Help us preserve these endangered mammals and accept them as your **very special neighbors!**

You can learn more about bats on the **Slovenian Association for Bat Research and Conservation (SDPVN)** website

- www.sdpvn-drustvo.si and
- www.facebook.com/sdpvn.

Join us!

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The Slovenian version of the informational leaflet is a part of the project "Greater mouse-eared bats – our special neighbors! Preserve church shelters of the greater mouse-eared bat". The project is partly financed by the Ministry of the Environment and Spatial Planning. Electronic English version was prepared in association with "STIKS - društveno stičišče ŠOU v Ljubljani" and voluntary work of the Slovenian Association for Bat Research and Conservation members.

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GREATER MOUSE-EARED BATS

- our *special* neighbors!



Why are bats so *special*?

1 Bats are the **only flying mammals**. Their wings allow exceptional flying skills – the wings are a very thin flexible membrane stretched between their long fingers, legs and tail.

Long-eared bats use their extremely large ears to listen to prey sounds and hunt insects even in total darkness.



2 Although bats have a developed vision, they **rely on their hearing to navigate**. They emit high-frequency calls and create a picture of the environment by listening to the echoes. With **echolocation**, they are able to detect obstacles as thin as a hair.

3 When resting, they effortlessly **hang upside down** by the claws on their feet. Venous valves make sure that not all their blood “rushes to their heads”.

4 In Europe, bats eat insects (moths, mosquitoes, beetles) and other arthropods (spiders, centipedes). They have an important role regulating their numbers in the environment.



Because they use their own weight and a system of tendons in their toes and feet to clamp their claws into little cracks, bats do not get tired while hanging.

5 Bats are the second most species-rich group of mammals. The researchers have described more than **1,200 different species** of bats to date – in Europe, we can find more than **40 species**.



Bats are our *neighbors*



Kuhl's pipistrelle bats love to snuggle into very narrow gaps on buildings (female bat with its young bat).

Photo: Manika Podgorelec

Bats choose to live in **quiet and dark corners**. They do not build nests but rather look for natural shelters.

Man's changing of nature reduced the number of natural shelters for bats. Because of this, bats often find their homes in **our neighborhoods**.



Photo: Simon Zidar



Photo: Simon Zidar



Photo: Simon Zidar

Warm church and castle **attics** provide shelter especially in summer when female bats bear young and take care of them.

Some bats find shelter even in **holes, narrow as a thumb**, behind exterior wood paneling on buildings or behind open shutters.

Bats can spend an entire year in **basements**, mines and **caves**. They especially love damp low-temperature places when they hibernate.

Holes in tree trunks provide shelter for a number of bat species. They seek shelter in abandoned holes, cracks and even behind the tree bark not only in woods but also in orchards and parks.



Very *endangered* and vulnerable

Due to their mysterious night life, people often wrongly associate bats with something evil and dark. In fact, they are harmless, **will not get tangled in our hair and will not drink our blood**.

While they do not have many natural enemies, **man endangers them the most**.

They are one of the most endangered group of vertebrates in Europe!

Many bat species **depend on shelters in buildings**, where they return each year. We should not allow that they become homeless because of our actions!

- **Do not disturb** the bats.
- Do not prevent them access to their shelters – do not close their emergence holes in buildings.
- Do not renovate parts of buildings when bats are present.

Bats and their habitats are **protected** by the Slovenian and the international law.

However, their existence often depends on our actions – we can allow them to **coexist with us** by understanding their situation.

Whiskered bats love cracks and crevices in trees and houses.



Photo: Simon Zidar