

A guide to bat droppings and feeding remains

The discovery of droppings at a survey site is perhaps the easiest method to prove that bats have used it as a roost. Bats, being entirely insectivorous in Britain, produce droppings that only contain the indigestible parts of their insect prey. This gives the droppings a crumbly texture unlike mice droppings which become very hard when dry. The size, shape and texture of a bat dropping can help to identify the species that produced it. The situation the dropping was found in, stuck to a wall or below a beam in a barn, can also help with the identification together with any feeding remains that may be present. Pipistrelle droppings are often stuck to walls or windows below the roost entrance whilst those of the Brown Long-eared bat are scattered throughout their roost with concentrations below regular roosting places

The following measurements of droppings are taken from 'Which Bat Is It' by R E Stebbings. The droppings were measured when fresh but air dry. Only species that have been recorded in Nottinghamshire are shown. Particle size can be very difficult to estimate but with practice becomes easier. Most batworkers will have a reference collection of droppings from known species to help with identification. It should be noted that whilst droppings can give a strong indication of the species concerned it is rarely 100% certain.

Species	Particle size	Diameter (mm)	Length (mm)
Pipistrelle	Fine	1.5 – 2.0	7 – 9
Daubenton's	Fine	1.5 – 2.0	8 – 9
Whiskered/Brandt's	Medium	2.0 – 2.3	6 – 9
Natterer's	Medium	2.3 – 3.3	8 – 11
Brown Long-eared	Medium/Coarse	2.5 – 3.0	8 – 10
Leisler's	Medium	2.5 – 3.0	6 – 9
Noctule	Medium	3.0 – 3.5	11 – 15
Serotine	Coarse	3.5 – 4.0	8 – 11

Notes

1. Droppings can vary a great deal in colour from a light brown to black depending on what the bat has eaten.

2. The length of droppings is very variable and certain diets make them more fragile causing them to split into smaller fragments.

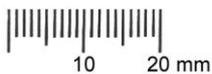
Brown Long-eared



Whiskered/Brandt's



Pipistrelle



All droppings above are shown at actual size

Feeding remains

Bats that prey on large insects such as moths will often take them to a regular feeding perch e.g. a church porch or an open barn. The examples opposite were collected from a barn used as a regular feeding roost by Brown Long-eared bats. Often the head of the insect remains as the bat has only eaten the juicy abdomen. Butterfly wings from Small Tortoiseshell and Peacock are often found in these wing collections. Both species enter roof spaces and barns in late summer to hibernate and are easily gleaned by bats. Butterflies are also easy prey for spiders so do not assume that bats are always responsible.

