



THE COUNTRYSIDE
RESTORATION TRUST

CREATING A LIVING AND WORKING COUNTRYSIDE

MEDIA RELEASE

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The CRT Goes Batty About Bats

This year the Countryside Restoration Trust's (CRT) Lark Rise Farm, in Cambridgeshire, has been bursting with bats. When 142 acres of prairie land were bought in 1998, bat monitoring showed an almost complete absence of bats. The best result was just two Pipistrelle bats after some twelve hours of searching with a bat detector.

Now after introducing wildlife-friendly methods of farming, a recent bat survey registered 34 bats in six hours. Most of the recordings have been from small Pipistrelle bats, but there have also been signals from larger Noctule or Serotine bats. Other species such as Barbastelle and Brown Long-eared bats are known to visit.

Dr Vince Lea, the CRT's Monitoring Officer, says: **"These exciting results have been verified this year with an exact replica survey of ten years ago. It has shown a staggering 18-fold increase in bat activity with bats regularly feeding over the farmland and brook banks, whereas a decade ago the bats were using the land only as a commuter route. It shows that a resident population of up to ten pipstrelles is thought to be using an area once nearly devoid of bats"**.

CRT Chairman Robin Page says: **"The results are extremely important. They show that the exciting work we have undertaken to reverse the decline in farmland birds is also helping bats, which are under increasing pressure. A Pipistrelle bat needs up to 3000 insects a night. Our wildlife-friendly farming is now producing plenty of insects for birds and bats. It is tremendous news"**.

Lark Rise Farm lies next to the Bourn Brook in southwest Cambridgeshire, shortly before it runs into the River Cam at Byron's Pool. The CRT's bat-friendly farming techniques could be adopted by most farmers in arable areas for the benefit of a wide range of wildlife from farmland birds and brown hares, to bats.

The CRT's Bat-Friendly Farming Formula:

- The flood plain of the brook was taken out of cereal production and converted into traditional hay meadows.
- The banks of the nearby brook and ditches are not flailed during spring, summer and autumn to allow for flourishing insect populations and less bank erosion.
- Rough areas are not "tidied" they are allowed to go "wild".
- Bank-side trees and bushes are left "untidied" and cracks in willows are left for roosting bats.
- New habitats such as a pond, hedges, osier beds and spinneys have all helped to create good insect habitat.
- The arable land away from the meadowland is managed sensitively, without the use of insecticides.

To help its increasing bat populations the CRT is hoping to provide additional artificial bat roosts over the next two or three years.

Ends

Notes for Editors:

For further information, please contact The Countryside Restoration Trust office on 01223 262999 or email info@livingcountryside.org.uk.

The Countryside Restoration Trust is a farming and conservation charity which aims to protect and restore Britain's countryside with wildlife-friendly and commercially-viable agriculture. The Trust is committed to promoting the importance of a living and working countryside through education, demonstration and community involvement.

The Trust is establishing a network of demonstration farms across Britain which, using sensitive farming methods, will show how to protect wildlife, produce quality, seasonal food and preserve our countryside for future generations.

The Trust is also using living, working farms as educational centres of expertise to inspire farmers, land managers, the general public and politicians.

AVAILABLE FOR INTERVIEW

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