

CARMARTHENSHIRE'S STATE OF NATURE – SECTION 7 'PRIORITY' MAMMALS

Environment (Wales) Act 2016 – Section 7 - Biodiversity lists and duty to take steps to maintain and enhance biodiversity.

The species listed in this table have been identified by Welsh Government (WG) as part of a list of species and types of habitat found in Wales that they consider are of key significance to maintain and enhance biodiversity in this country. This list (Section 7 list) is currently under review by WG and Natural Resources Wales (as of 2024).



Public authorities (e.g. WG, councils) must take reasonable steps to maintain and enhance the species and types of habitat included in Section 7 and encourage others to take such steps. By safeguarding these species and habitats, improving their management and raising awareness about them it is hoped that a resilient natural environment in Wales will be sustained into the future.

It is the Section 7 species that the Carmarthenshire Nature Partnership consider for priority action, but other species have been identified for local action where there are few records or where Carmarthenshire has populations where specific action can help conserve enhance the species.



Associated habitats refers to the relevant Section 7 Priority habitats in Wales.

Please refer to the Mammals Society's [State of Mammals in Wales](#) 2020 and the [Carmarthenshire Bat Atlas](#) 2021 for more detailed species description information.




*Red list status is taken from the State of Mammals in Wales 2020 (see page 35 of that document)

CARMARTHENSHIRE SECTION 7 'PRIORITY' MAMMAL SPECIES – recorded since 2000		
SPECIES	CARMARTHENSHIRE OVERVIEW	PRIORITY ACTION
<p><i>Martes martes</i> - Pine Marten</p>  <p>©Tony Braithewaite</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Associated habitat: Pine martens are solitary mammals, living at low densities in deciduous and conifer woodlands as well as more open country such as rocky and craggy areas. • Current status: in Wales the otter's 'Red list'* status is currently listed as Critically endangered • There has likely always been a relict population in the county with records from the north and east, the most recent being in Allt Rhyd y Groes in 2013 in the upper Tywi Valley. • Threats: There are a number of reasons why pine marten populations are unable to recover by themselves: forest cover is fragmented and in the larger upland plantations prey density is low; suitable trees with cavities are scarce, rocky uplands offering an alternative refuge are heavily grazed and prey poor. • Current action: After a feasibility study the Vincent Wildlife Trust have undertaken a <u>Pine Marten Recovery Project</u> in mid Wales. Between 2015 and 2017, 51 pine martens were captured in Scotland, in areas where there is a healthy pine marten population, under licence from Scottish Natural Heritage. These animals were translocated and released in forestry in mid-Wales. There are now an increasing number of sightings in the County – especially in the north. Often on trail cameras monitoring red squirrels. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage records to be submitted to WWBIC. • Consider den box schemes in woodlands if and when where records appear. • Promote and inform landowners about the species to avoid persecution. • Make sure forestry operators are aware if they move into an area to avoid accidental killing/den destruction during operations
<p><i>Arvicola amphibius</i> - Water Vole</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Associated habitat: Freshwater/wetland habitats • Once much more widely distributed, now the main populations are on the Llanelli levels and the Laugharne–Pendine area. • There a few records from upland areas and water voles are probably under recorded in these areas of the county. • Current status: In Wales, the water vole's 'Red list'* status is currently listed as Endangered • Llanelli is a National Key Site for water vole in the UK. • Threats: Habitat loss/fragmentation and degradation due to agricultural practices, development, and river and canal bank reinforcement and mink predation have all caused declines in this animal in the county. • Current action: About 450 water voles were released in the Pembrey area as part of NRW's Water Vole Strategy for south Wales in 2014/15. They were taken 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Records from suitable upland areas – targeted surveys of CNP managed land/raise awareness




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	<p>from breeding stock in Llanelli. Along with habitat management and mink control (undertaken annually), this should significantly improve the future viability of this endangered species. They appear to have spread to adjacent suitable habitat, e.g. Pembrey Canal.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A number of CNP partners manage sites with water voles: WTSWW, WWT, CCC, Machynys Golf Course. 	
<p><i>Sciurus vulgaris</i> Red Squirrel</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Associated habitat: in Carmarthenshire the red squirrel is now mainly confined to of large conifer plantations in the north of the county. There are occasional sightings in deciduous woodland surrounding these forests. • Current status: in Wales the red squirrel's 'Red list'* status is currently listed as Endangered. <p>In Mid Wales they occur at low density although they may be expanding in their range.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Threats: grey squirrels are an ongoing threat to reds through the domination of habitat and as carriers of the deadly squirrelpox virus. • Fragmentation and loss of suitable conifer species in the mid Wales forests are a local threat as well as tree diseases and the widespread planting of sitka spruce, which is unfavourable to red squirrels. <p>Current action</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Mid Wales Red Squirrel Partnership is working to conserve and enhance red squirrels in mid Wales. • MWRSP Project officers work with volunteers/community groups on surveys and grey squirrel control, and with NRW and forest managers on habitat management in the core project area. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage records in suitable areas where Red Squirrels might be seen • Promotion of the Mid Wales Red Squirrel Partnership
<p><i>Barbastella barbastellus</i> - Barbastelle Bat</p>  <p>© Hugh Clark/ www.bats.org.uk</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Associated habitat: Woodland • A predominantly tree-dwelling species associated with woodland with a high proportion of standing dead wood or storm-damaged trees. In Carmarthenshire it probably occurs in the larger and more mature and diverse steep-sided valley woods. • Roosts: summer - behind loose bark, in tree crevices, buildings, boxes. Winter – caves, mines, old railway tunnels. • Current status: In Wales, the barbastelle's 'Red list'* status is currently listed as Vulnerable <p>In Carmarthenshire it is considered to be very rare.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Threats: Barbastelle bats are specialist moth eaters and may well be adverse affected by the recorded declines in moths in woodlands and habitat quality of ancient woodland. • Without suitably managed old mature broadleaf woodland there will be shortage of suitable roosting opportunities, i.e. behind flaking bark. Colonies require many trees with features in an area as they are very transient in their usage. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Survey suitable woodlands with static bat detectors to establish presence – new methods that can indicate when a maternity colony may be present in development • Promote woodland bats with landowners to ensure suitable management applied
<p><i>Erinaceus europaeus</i> - European Hedgehog</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Associated habitat: Habitat varies from hedge bottoms, back gardens and the grassy fringes of fields. Increasingly associated with urban areas, particularly parks and gardens. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage records to be submitted to WWBIC • Raise awareness of positive action that can be undertaken for hedgehogs – via




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 <p>© M Newton</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current status: In Wales the hedgehog's 'Red list'* status is currently listed as Vulnerable • Little is known of their numbers or distribution in the county but, along with the rest of the country, there appears to be a decline in their numbers. • Threats: include reduction in habitat availability and quality, with the decline of mixed farming, use of chemicals in gardens and modern garden design. Many are also killed on the roads. Predation and competitive exclusion by badgers may also have an impact. 	<p>T&CCs/partner newsletters/schools.</p>
<p><i>Lutra lutra</i> - Otter</p>  <p>© Mark Newton</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Associated habitat: Freshwater/Wetlands/Coastal • Current status: in Wales the otter's 'Red list'* status is currently listed as Vulnerable • Otters are widely distributed on water courses and associated habitats throughout the county. They are occasionally seen in more urban areas such as Llanelli and along the Tywi below Carmarthen. They are occasionally now seen along our coastline as well but need freshwater for cleaning salt from their fur. • Threats: Populations recovered nationally after the banning of persistent organic pesticides. Today road traffic accidents are one of the principal causes of death and populations may be limited by a lack of suitable isolated breeding sites and a lack of prey species, especially freshwater eel. The effects of other forms of aquatic pollution on populations may also have an impact. • Current action: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A number of otter pipes have been installed as part of road schemes or upgrades by the Council. • A project to install a dry pipe at a road death 'hot spot' at Kidwelly is underway. • Artificial holts have been constructed by partners at suitable locations • Corpses are taken to Cardiff University for autopsy, to investigate contaminants, disease and population biology. 	
<p><i>Micromys minutus</i> - Harvest Mouse</p>  <p>© Vaughan Matthews</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Associated habitat: Wetland/Farmland - lives in habitats with long tussocky grassland/herbaceous plants, reedbeds, hedgerows and around woodland edges. • Current status: in Wales the harvest mouse 'Red list'* status is currently listed as Vulnerable • Very little is known about this elusive mammal in the county. There are sparse records in the county including Ffrwd Fen, Pembrey and two Local Nature Reserves. • It is thought it is thought that they are under-recorded and likely present in suitable habitat elsewhere. • Threats: harvesting of cereals/habitat management before the end of the harvest mouse breeding season impact on populations. Populations naturally show great variation in size, which makes survey more challenging. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Targeted surveys of suitable habitats
<p><i>Muscardinus avellanarius</i> - Dormouse</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Associated habitat: Farmland (hedgerows and scrub)/Woodland. Woods with well-developed understories are good habitat and hedgerows, scrub and bramble habitat is important. Dormice sometimes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage records to be submitted to WWBIC




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 <p>© Jacqueline Bond</p>	<p>seem to use <i>Molinia</i> tussocks for their hibernation nests.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current status: in Wales the dormouse 'Red list'* status is currently listed as Vulnerable • The main stronghold for dormice in the county is the triangle formed by Carmarthen, Llandeilo and Llanelli although there are records elsewhere. • Threats: loss/fragmentation of habitat, as well as reduced woodland management, is a major cause of decline in the county as it causes isolation of populations • Current action • There are a number of sites with dormouse boxes that are monitored in the county by partners and some are experimenting with using dormouse footprint tunnels as a way of identifying the presence of dormice. • CNP partners with known dormouse habitat actively manage sites for this species, e.g. CCC, WTSWW, NT, WT, NBGW. 	
<p><i>Rhinolophus ferrumequinum</i> - Greater Horseshoe Bat</p>  <p>© Tom McOwat</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Associated habitat: it eats mainly larger insects such as chafers, dung beetles, moths and caddis flies, typically foraging around cattle-grazed pasture. • Roosts: summer - usually buildings in open roof spaces. Winter – underground, e.g. caves, mines, tunnels • Current status: in Wales the greater horseshoe bat's 'Red list'* status is currently listed as Near Threatened • Greater horseshoes are probably widespread but in low numbers, being mainly restricted to the southern half of the county but they also occur all the way up the Tywi valley to at least Llandovery and at Dolaucothi. <p>Most records are from wintering individuals in caves and mines.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Threats: Intensive dairy and beef cattle production, and widespread use of anti-parasitic agents, may reduce the availability of dung beetles and other prey. Greater horseshoe bats are adversely affected by artificial night lighting. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote reduction in use of Avamectins and suitable farming techniques in areas close to records. • Promote reduction in unnecessary lighting /dark sky initiatives • Safeguard known roosting sites and search for new sites to facilitate spread.
<p><i>Lepus europaeus</i> -Brown Hare</p>  <p>© Mark Newton</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Associated habitat: Lowland Grassland and Heathland/Coastal/Brownfield /Woodland/Upland • Current status: in Wales the brown hare's 'Red list'* status is currently listed as Least Concern • Once much more widely distributed, now the main populations appear to be in less intensively farmed and more hilly areas. In addition the Pembrey coastal areas around may also be important in the county for hares. • Threats: Loss of habitat diversity in the agricultural landscape, changes in cropping and planting regimes, such as a move from hay to silage, and autumn sowing of cereals are causes for the decline. There may be emerging threats from disease. • A postcard campaign for records was successful in yielding a number of records in the county. 	
<p><i>Rhinolophus hipposideros</i> - Lesser Horseshoe Bat</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Associated habitat: broadleaved woodland, wooded riparian corridors, and mature tree-lines and hedgerow. They eat a variety of smaller insects. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure quality woodland and connectivity is maintained in areas within core sustenance zones of known roosts.

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 <p>© Conor Kelleher/ www.bats.org.uk</p>	<p>• Roosts: summer- buildings with access to open roof spaces and warm boiler rooms. Males will use caves and tunnels. Depending upon life stage, they will also use underground sites and cellars year round.</p> <p>In Carmarthenshire, cave systems, especially those associated with the limestone ridge are important hibernation sites, as are some of the old mineral workings.</p> <p>• Current status: in Wales the lesser horseshoe bat's 'Red list'* status is currently listed as Least Concern</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wales is a European stronghold for this species. • There are an increasing number of records of this species in recent years. <p>In Carmarthenshire, it has been recorded in the south and south-west of the county with very few records in the north and considered rare.</p> <p>Lesser horseshoes have a more restricted distribution, but they are also the most secretive and most easily overlooked.</p> <p>• Threats: human disturbance, particularly of hibernation sites, may be damaging. Changes to agricultural practice may also reduce prey availability. Lesser horseshoe bats are vulnerable to road vehicle collisions and are adversely affected by artificial night lighting.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote reduction in unnecessary lighting /dark sky initiatives • Safeguard known roosting sites and search for new sites to facilitate spread.
<p><i>Mustela putorius</i> - Polecat</p>  <p>© K. Williamson</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Associated habitats: polecats are found in a variety of habitats including farmland, woodland, marsh, riverbanks, hedgebanks, coastal habitats and even urban areas. • Current status: in Wales the polecat's 'Red list'* status is currently listed as Least Concern • Polecat populations increased following a dramatic decline from past persecution. Mid Wales remained a stronghold for them. • There are records of them throughout the county, but they remain somewhat elusive. Most often sighted as roadkill. • Threats: there is a concern that consumption of rats contaminated with rodenticide and any decline in the rabbit population could have a negative effect on the polecat population. • The Vincent Wildlife Trust collected during a 2014–15 survey of wild-living polecats or feral ferrets in the UK. Of the Carmarthenshire records that could be verified, over 95% could be classified as pure polecat. 	
<p><i>Nyctalus noctule</i> - Noctule Bat</p>  <p>© R.E. Stebbings/ www.bats.org.uk</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Associated habitat: Associated with wooded areas and parkland areas. One of our largest bats, it feeds on a range of invertebrates including small flies, beetles and moths. • Roosts: summer – high up in tree holes (e.g. in old woodpecker nest sites and rot holes), occasionally found in buildings and bat boxes. Winter – thick-walled tree holes, rock crevices and crevices in buildings. • Current status: in Wales the noctule bat's 'Red list'* status is currently listed as Least Concern • Despite being a widespread species relatively few 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote appropriate tree management.

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	<p>roosts are known and monitored in Wales. In Carmarthenshire it is considered widespread and fairly common.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Threats: This is one of the primary species killed at wind turbines. 	
<p><i>Pipistrellus pygmaeus</i> - Soprano Pipistrelle Bat</p>  <p>© Hugh Clark/ www.bats.org.uk</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Associated habitat: It is a small bat which is usually found in wetland habitats, for example around rivers and lakes but also woodland edges, tree lines, hedgerows, gardens and parks. It mainly eats small flies, particularly midges and mosquitos associated with water. • Roosts: summer- crevices around the outside of houses and buildings. Winter - crevices of buildings and trees, and also in bat boxes. • Current status: in Wales the soprano pipistrelle's 'Red list'* status is currently listed as Least Concern <p>Common and widespread species in the county.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Threats: The species has some of the highest casualty rates from cat predation, vehicle collisions and wind turbine collisions. The use of breathable roofing membranes, and other alterations to buildings, may have lowered the thermal suitability of roosts in roof spaces. • Although common, that also means most regularly in conflict with development so small regularly losses add up. 	
<p><i>Plecotus auratus</i> - Brown Long-eared Bat</p>  <p>© John Altringham/ www.bats.org.uk</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Associated habitat: They fly close to vegetation or in woodland, often using their large ears to listen for prey sounds and gleaning insects from the surface of foliage. It eats mainly moths, beetles, flies earwigs and spiders. • Roosts: summer - are in small colonies in older buildings, barns, churches, bat boxes and trees. Winter – caves, tunnels, mines – occasionally trees and buildings. • Current status: in Wales the brown long-eared bat's 'Red list'* status is currently listed as Least Concern <p>Common and widespread species in the county.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Threats: Brown long-eared bats are light-shy, so they are adversely affected by artificial night lighting. The use of breathable roofing membranes, and other alterations to buildings, may have lowered the thermal suitability of roosts in roof spaces. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote reduction in unnecessary lighting /dark sky initiatives
<p><i>Pipistrellus pipistrellus</i> - Common Pipistrelle Bat</p>  <p>© Hugh Clark/ www.bats.org.uk</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Associated habitat: It is a small bat which is found in a wide range of habitats including farmland, woodlands and suburban and urban habitats. It mainly eats small flies. • Roosts: Summer - crevices around the outside of houses and buildings, bat boxes, tree holes/crevices. Winter – crevices of buildings and trees and boxes. • Current status: in Wales the lesser horseshoe bat's 'Red list'* status is currently listed as Least Concern <p>Common and widespread species in the county.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Threats: The species has some of the highest casualty rates from cat predation, vehicle collisions 	

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	<p>and wind turbine collisions. The use of breathable roofing membranes, and other alterations to buildings, may have lowered the thermal suitability of roosts in roof spaces.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Although common, that also means most regularly in conflict with development so small regularly losses add up. 	
Locally Important Species in Carmarthenshire – not included on the Section 7 list of priority species		
<p><i>Myotis mystacinus</i>/<i>M. brandtii</i> Whiskered/Brandt's Bats</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Associated habitat: woodlands, grasslands, hedgerows, and wetlands. They feed on flying insects. <p>Only distantly related whiskered and Brandt's bats are cryptic species, similar in morphology, flight pattern and habitat and hard to distinguish with a bat detector.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Roosts: summer – buildings, trees, bat boxes. Winter - underground tunnels, ice houses and caves. • Current status: in Wales Whiskered/Brandt's bats' 'Red list'* status is currently listed as Data deficient <p>In Carmarthenshire, whiskered bats are considered widespread and fairly rare; Brandt's bat as very rare.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Threats: No specific information is available on threats in Britain. However, they are likely to be adversely affected by artificial lighting and by habitat loss. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Action required around defining distributions of the two species.
<p><i>Eptesicus serotinus</i> Serotine bat</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Associated habitat: pasture and parkland. They feed on large beetles and moths. • Roosts: summer – buildings close to woodland, water, Grassland. Winter – little known about hibernation roosts - most likely Buildings. • Current status: in Wales the Serotine bat's 'Red list'* status is currently listed as Vulnerable • Considered very rare in Carmarthenshire. • Threats: alterations to building design, especially the use of breathable roofing membranes, can make buildings less suitable. Agricultural intensification and the use of anti-parasitic drugs have reduced prey availability. Serotine bats are susceptible to high juvenile mortality in poor weather conditions, so the population may be adversely affected by weather fluctuations caused by climate change. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Survey and roost searching first priority
<p>Nathusius' pipistrelle (<i>Pipistrellus nathusii</i>)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Associated habitat: The species is associated with water, and most records come from within a few kilometres of large freshwater lakes or river estuaries. It feeds on flying insects. • Current status: in Wales the Nathusius' pipistrelle's 'Red list'* status is currently listed as Vulnerable. <p>Little is known about this migrant species in Wales. Until recently it was thought to be vagrant, although it is thought that some remain all year and breed in the UK.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Considered extremely rare in Carmarthenshire <p>Roosts: summer – cracks/crevices/cavity walls/under slates in brick buildings. NB. No maternity roosts identified in Wales. Winter – cracks/crevices in buildings/rocks/bat boxes.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In Carmarthenshire there is a need to better understand distribution first and if it is resident.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Threats: climate change is thought likely to have contributed to the increasing numbers of Nathusius' pipistrelle bats recorded in Britain. The species is at high risk from collision with wind turbines, with offshore developments along its migratory routes being a particular concern. 	
<i>Neomys fodiens</i> Water Shrew	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Associated habitat: freshwater/wetland habitat but also hedgerows and associated ditches • Current status: in Wales water shrew's 'Red list'* status is currently listed as Least Concern <p>In Carmarthenshire there are only 30 records from 2000 onwards. This may well be linked to lack of survey effort rather than true absence of this species. This species is Data Deficient in the county.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Threats: Reduction of available habitat, caused by bank clearance and modification of waterways, has led to the destruction of burrows and alterations of water courses. The species is likely to be at risk from poor water quality and a decline in the habitat quality of ditches. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage more records of this species
<i>Mustela ermina</i> Stoat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Associated habitat: Farmland/Coastal • Current status: in Wales the stoat's 'Red list'* status is currently listed as Near Threatened. <p>Only 18 records from 2000 onwards. This may well be linked to lack of survey effort rather than true absence of this species. This species is Data Deficient in the county.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Threats: Decline in prey populations, e.g. rabbits, is likely to have an impact. Stoats may also be at risk from consuming prey poisoned by rodenticides. Loss of preferred habitat is an increasing threat. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage more records of this species