

The bats of the Opawskie Mountains

Bats are nocturnal mammals capable of flying. Their long, membrane-covered digits form a certain kind of wings. The body of a bat is covered with fur. Some species of bats parallel some of the most efficient flying birds. Bats sleep upside-down during the day. When the night comes, they search for food. Bats orientate by releasing a series of high-frequency sounds called ultrasounds. This allows them to accurately locate insects' bodies, rocks and other obstacles. Some species of bats can fly as fast as 100 km (62 mi) per hour. The flight speed depends on the shape and structure of its wings. Bats with long, narrow wings are the fastest. The ones with short, wide wings fly slower, although they are more agile in the air. Bats are long-lived creatures. The oldest one we have ever recorded was more than 30 years old. What is more, we often encounter bats which are more than 20 years old. Many bat species can be found in the Opawskie Mountains, such as: the lesser horseshoe bat, the brown long-eared bat, the northern bat, the serotine bat, the common noctule, the pipistrellus, the barbastelle and the mouse-eared bats: the greater mouse-eared bat, the Daubenton's bat, the Geoffroy's bat and the Bechstein's bat.



Bats release sounds called ultrasounds when flying.

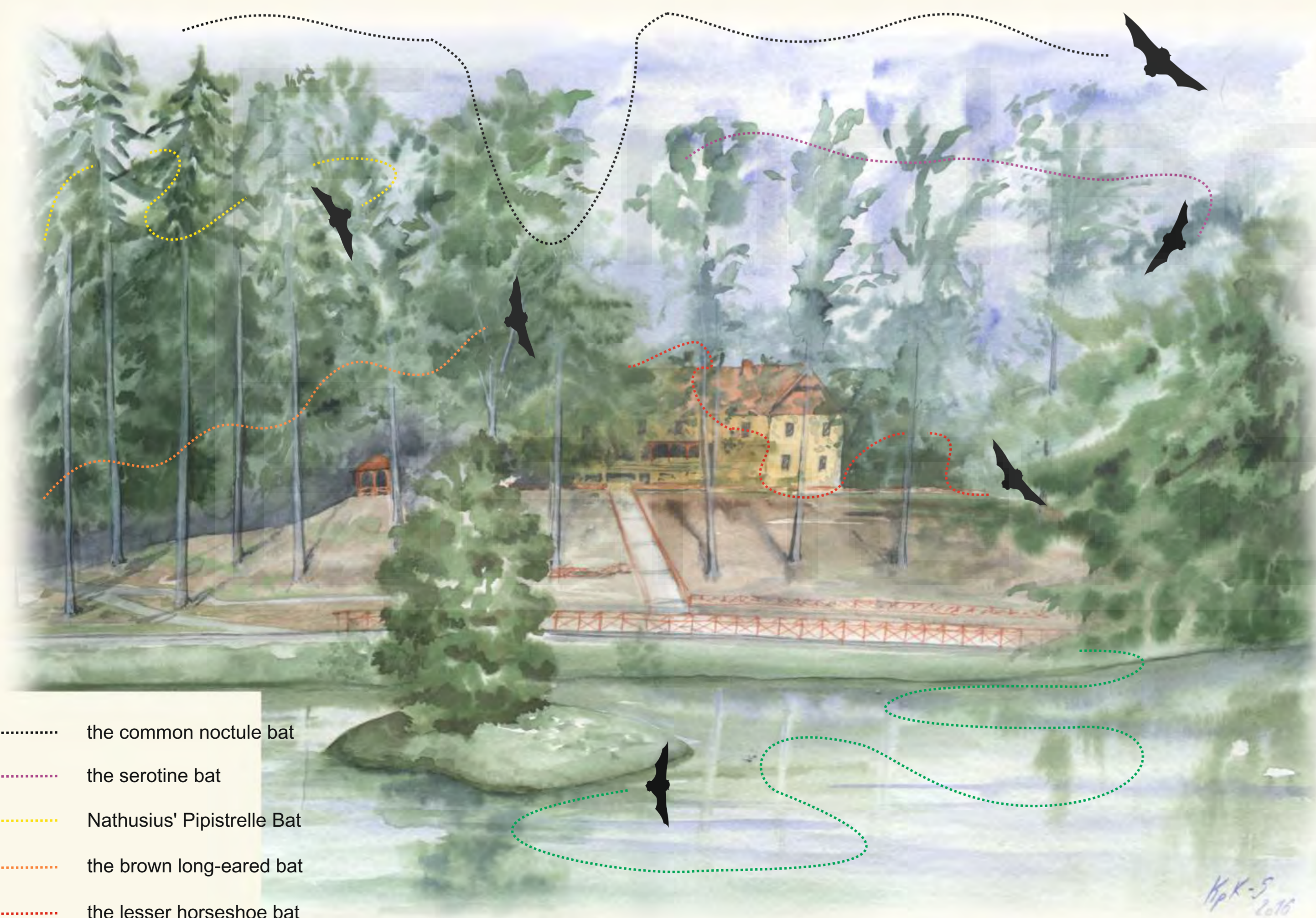
The lesser horseshoe bat (*Rhinolophus hipposideros*)

Body length: from 3,4 to 4,5 cm (1.33-1.77 in)
Wingspan: from 20 to 25 cm (7.9-9.8 in)

The lesser horseshoe bat (Rhinolophus hipposideros)

One of the rarest and the most endangered bat species in Poland is also one of the smallest representatives of this group of mammals. Even though it may seem quite large when flying (its wingspan reaches 25 cm (9.8 in)), it weighs only a few grams. Its most characteristic features are the horseshoe-shaped protuberances surrounding its nostrils, to which it owes the generic name of the horseshoe bats, and its characteristic silhouette when resting and hibernating, during which the entire body of the animal is wrapped in the patagium of its wings. The lesser horseshoe bat is a predator. Its primary source of food is made up of small insects and other invertebrates measuring from 3 to 14 mm (0.11-0.55 in). Interestingly, it can pick them up from the surface of rocks and plants while hanging in the air like a hummingbird. The extremely precise echolocation sensory system that is based on the exceptionally high frequency of ultrasounds emitted by its nostrils enables it to detect potential victims.

The surrounding area of the pension near the Upper Pond (Górny Staw) is the feeding ground for many bat species. You can spot some of them after dark,



- the common noctule bat
- the serotine bat
- Nathusius' Pipistrelle Bat
- the brown long-eared bat
- the lesser horseshoe bat
- the Daubenton's bat



The content-related supervision of the lesser horseshoe bat's site is provided by the Polish Society of Wildlife Friends "pro Natura" (Polskie Towarzystwo Przyjaciół Przyrody "pro Natura").