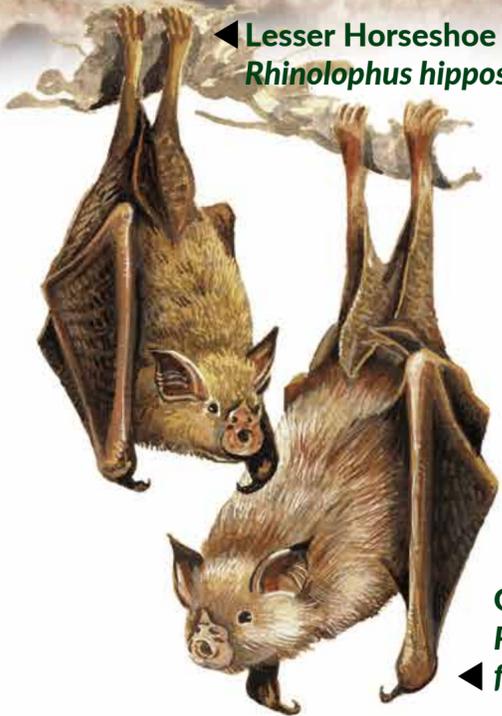


# BATS IN MALTA

## LEGALLY PROTECTED

◀ Lesser Horseshoe Bat  
*Rhinolophus hipposideros*



Soprano Pipistrelle  
*Pipistrellus pygmaeus*



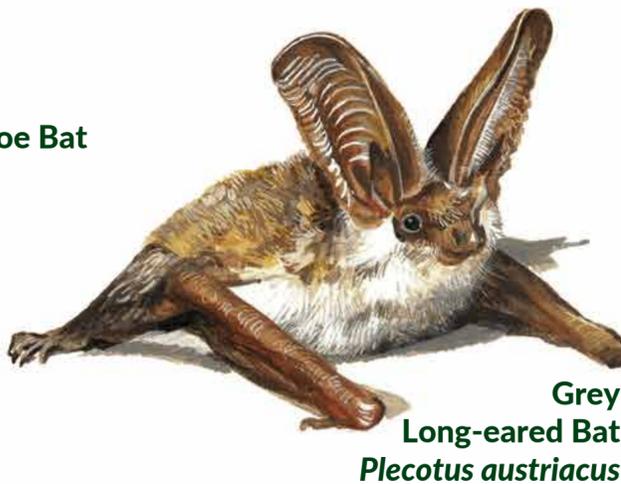
Maghrebian Mouse-eared Bat  
*Myotis punicus*



Greater Horseshoe Bat  
*Rhinolophus ferrumequinum*



Schreiber's Bent-winged Bat  
*Miniopterus schreibersi*



Grey Long-eared Bat  
*Plecotus austriacus*

Kuhl's Pipistrelle  
*Pipistrellus kuhlii*



Noctule  
*Nyctalus noctula*



Serotine  
*Eptesicus serotinus*



European Free-tailed Bat  
*Tadarida teniotis*

Bats are the only true flying mammals that exist, depending on flight for movement. Flight is enabled by a thin elastic membrane which forms the wings and is held between the fore limbs and legs. All local bat species are essentially insectivorous. The illustrations show bat species recorded from the Maltese Islands.

### Ecology

- Bats are essentially nocturnal, that is, they sleep in their roost during the day and come out after sunset to forage for food.
- Although bats can see, they locate prey and avoid obstacles by emitting ultrasonic pulses, inaudible to the human ear and comparing them to the echoes reflected from their surroundings, a process known as echolocation.

- Bats tend to form social colonies and roost in a number of local habitats, which consist mainly of sheltered places such as caves and wooded areas; however, they also inhabit open areas, agricultural land and cliffs.
- They also roost in man-made structures such as fortifications, chapels and other buildings as well as underground structures such as water tunnels.
- Bats are exceptionally vulnerable to extinction due to their slow reproductive rate, normally just one offspring per year.
- In Malta, bats are active during the summer period and hibernate in winter. Disturbance during the winter period would limit the chances of their survival as they would expend precious energy for flight instead of conserving food reserves.

### Status and major threats

- In Malta bats are threatened because the areas where they roost and feed are modified, disturbed or lost, whilst individuals are occasionally persecuted, captured and killed.
- The indiscriminate use of insecticides also reduces their prey.

### Legal protection

- Bats are protected through the Environment Protection Act, the Bern Convention, the Bonn Convention and its EUROBATS Agreement as well as the EU Habitats Directive.
- This means that it is illegal to disturb, capture, kill, keep, sell or trade such species. A number of Natura 2000 sites have been designated to safeguard important bat habitats.