**Where do they live?**

Greater horseshoe bats live in different ‘roost’ sites throughout the year:

In the summer, the breeding females congregate in ‘maternity roosts’. These roost sites are usually old barns with slate roofs which remain dark, undisturbed and warm throughout the summer. The largest maternity roost in Devon houses over 1000 females in the summer months.

During the winter they hibernate or spend time in ‘torpor’ in caves, old cellars and cold, damp places which are dark and undisturbed. Being in torpor allows bats to reduce their metabolic rate and need for food during cooler spells but still enables them to go out foraging on warmer nights when insects may still be found.

Greater horseshoe bats also use a variety of other roost sites for feeding and mating, including old buildings, porches and mine adits.

Unlike other bats that squeeze into tight nooks and crannies in buildings, trees and caves, horseshoe bats need to hang freely and therefore need a large space for roosting. They are one of the only bats in Britain that truly hang upside down.

All the roost sites need to be well connected to the rest of the landscape by hedges, tree lines, woodlands or other features.

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**The Bat**

Size: the greater horseshoe bat is one of the UK’s largest bats with a wingspan of up to 40cm.

Weight: average of about 25 grams (or about the weight of two £2 coins)

Long lived species: greater horseshoe bats have been known to live up to 30 years.

Special feature: horseshoe bats have a complex horseshoe shaped nose leaf which distinguishes them from other UK bats.

Population: it is estimated that greater horseshoe bats have declined by over 90% in the last 100 years.
Habitat needs

Bats use echolocation to navigate their way around the night-time countryside and to locate their prey. They use their special horseshoe-shaped nose-leaf to produce focused high-pitched calls and associated echoes to determine their surroundings. Their calls are easily lost in the open which means that they are reliant on features in the landscape in order to find their way around. Hedgerows, woodland edges, trees, valleys, rivers and other useful landscape features may all be used.

Although they have been known to fly over 20 km in a night, they tend to favour areas close to their roost sites, meaning the better the habitat in the few kilometres surrounding their roosts the better their chances of raising young and surviving winter.

What do they eat?

Like all bats in the UK horseshoe bats are insectivorous. Greater horseshoe bats, being a larger bat tend to eat larger insects like moths and cockchafers.

Dung beetles make up a large part of their diet, particularly in the late summer when the young pups (baby bats) start flying. A large variety of insects are eaten throughout the year including craneflies, moths, parasitic wasps and other beetles. Look out for piles of wings and wing cases in roosts where they have been feeding.