



Bats At Stanford Reservoir



Stanford Reservoir together with the neighbouring parkland of Stanford Hall and the River Avon running through the landscape all add up to good bat habitat both for roosting and for foraging. Being insectivorous, there is plenty of flying food for bats at all levels, from the ground to high above the tree canopies. The management of the surrounding vegetation has helped the bats at the reservoir, in particular by providing the boundary hedge rows that bats use as navigational aids at night as well as foraging shelters in an otherwise open landscape. Twelve of the UK's seventeen species have been recorded in Northamptonshire and nine of these have been recorded at Stanford.

Natterer's Bat (*Myotis nattereri*)

Singles have been seen foraging around Blowers Lodge Bay (two occasions) and occasionally entering the dam tunnel at night (two occasions). This is a rare bat at Stanford.

Whiskered and Brandt's Bats (*Myotis mystacinus* and *Myotis brandtii*)

These are two very similar species that are hard to distinguish and were only separated as distinct species in 1970. Both have been caught and identified at Stanford Reservoir. They are seen every summer following the perimeter hedge row between the dam and Blowers Lodge Bay and along the disused railtrack. It is thought that they probably roost in trees in the wood (Downton Wood) at the back of Blowers Lodge Bay.

Daubenton's Bat (*Myotis daubentonii*)

The dam tunnel is used all summer but mainly as a night roost with up to 20 bats visiting. This has been used in the past as a day roost and occasionally babies have been brought in. Marking has shown that the turn over of individuals is high with any one individual usually present for only a week or two. Extremes have been singles that have been ringed but not seen again for twelve years, and three individuals not seen for nine years. The oldest bat to date (from ringing) is 21 years old. There is a peak in numbers in spring and again in autumn hinting at migration occurring. The bats seem to arrive nightly from the east, possibly from the woodland in fields on the north side of the reservoir.

They forage low over the water surface, mainly on chironomid and caddis flies, taken from the surface.

Individually ringed bats at this site have been seen at Rugby (rail bridge), Coombe Abbey, Warwickshire (cellars) and at Saddington Reservoir, Leicestershire (foraging). Ringed individuals are regularly seen moving along the canal between Northamptonshire and Leicestershire.

There has been a long term ringing study of this species at Stanford and selected results are given at the end of this article

Brown long-eared Bat (*Plecotus auritus*)

There is a summer roost in the roof void of the Manager's Cottage and these forage around the conifers lining the access track and around the edge of the reservoir. Another roost is present at nearby Stanford church.

Common and Soprano Pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus* and *Pipistrellus pygmaeus*)

Both species are regularly seen foraging around the edge of the reservoir with favourite areas being the back of Blowers Lodge Bay, near the dam and by the west hide. Occasionally a few are seen emerging from the Manager's Cottage. There is a large soprano pipistrelle roost at Stanford church.

Noctule (*Nyctalus noctula*)

The Noctule bat is one of the largest British species and is usually the first bat to appear in the evening, sometimes even before sunset. They have been recorded at Stanford during daylight. They appear each spring and forage over the reservoir, sometimes as many as five but are rarely present in the summer.

Serotine (*Eptesicus serotinus*)

One of the less common species of bat in the UK, it has a southern England distribution and is a rare bat in Northamptonshire.

There are two records for Stanford, both of single bats flying over the dam area (identified from sonograms).

Daubenton's Bat Study

Below are selected results from the long-term ringing study at Stanford Reservoir which began in 1983.

Background: like most other UK bat species Daubenton's bats have a single baby in mid-summer. This species feeds principally on aquatic insects, predominantly caddis flies and chironomids by gleaning them from the water surface. Bats are long-lived.

LZ9526 – A juvenile female when ringed on 9/9/1984. Controlled twice more at Stanford Reservoir in September, then on 22nd September 1984 on the canal just south of the canal tunnel at Husbands Bosworth, approximately 4 km away to the north-east.

LZ9566 – An adult female when ringed on 26th April 1985. Controlled at Coombe Abbey cellars (Warwickshire) on 20th September 1988, 19 km west.

R2156 – A male, ringed when at least one year old, on 27th September 1989. Controlled at Stanford Reservoir on single occasions in 1994, 1995, 1997, 2002 (twice), 2004, 2007, 2009 (twice) by which time it was at least 21 years old.

R8173 – A juvenile female when ringed on 2nd September 1994. Controlled on 20th September 1995, 16th May 1996 then not again until 2nd August 2007 – a gap of 11 years.

R8173 – A female ringed as a juvenile on 12th July 1989. It bred in 1990, 1991, 1992, 1993, 1994, 1995, 1996, 1997, no sign in 1998, unsure if bred in 1999, bred in 2001, 2002 and 2004 (missing in 2000 and 2003). This shows that it successfully bred in at least 11 years.

R4104 – A female ringed in its first year of life on 13th May 1992. It is known to have bred in 1996, 1999, 2004, 2006 and 2007, but was only present intermittently so there is an incomplete history but it does show it was still breeding when 16 years old

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