



Suffolk
Wildlife Trust

Soprano Pipistrelle

Pipistrellus pygmaeus

Snapshot: a maternity roost may have up to 1000 females; a single pipistrelle can eat up to 3,000 insects in one night.



Soprano Pipistrelles at a roost site
© Kevin Simmonds / Aurum Ecology

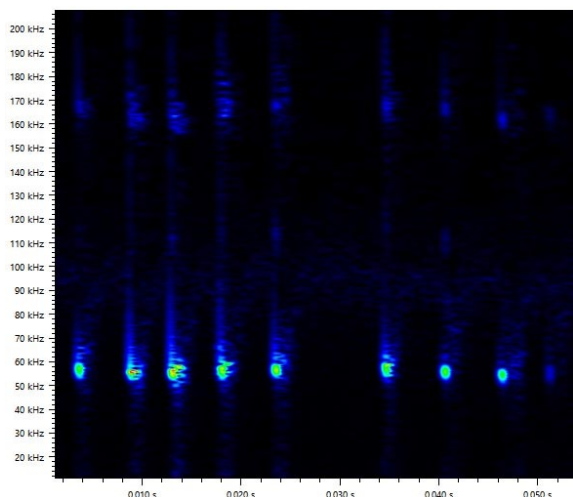
How to identify a Soprano Pipistrelle

Echolocation: peaks at 55 kHz. Calls sound like a series of clicks towards higher ranges, turning into 'wetter' slaps with the deepest slap at about 55kHz.

- **Size:** Small, head & body length 35 mm - 45 mm
- **Flight pattern:** fast, jerky flight catching small and eating small insects on the wing.
- **Distinctive features**
Small size
Emergence from roost about 20 minutes after sunset, flying 2-10m above the ground searching for insects with 'aerial hawking'.
- **Colour:** Medium to dark brown. Face and around the eyes usually pink.

Habitat and requirements

- Feed in wetland habitats, over lakes and rivers, also around woodland edge, tree lines and hedgerows, and in suburban gardens and parks.
- **Roost sites:** summer maternity roosts (several hundred up to 1000 females) in crevices of buildings i.e. behind hanging tiles, soffit and barge or eaves boarding, between roofing felt and roof tiles or in cavity walls. Also in tree holes and crevices and in bat boxes.
- **Hibernation:** usually in small numbers in crevices in buildings, trees and in bat boxes. Often in relatively exposed locations, rarely underground.



Soprano pipistrelle bat echolocation call (sonogram)

Threats

- Habitat loss through intensive agricultural practices.
- Impacts from building renovations, exclusion, toxic remedial timber treatment chemicals.
- Cat attacks.
- Increased lighting affecting roosts.
- Injury from wind farm and turbines.

Conservation

Considered Least Concern England

Protected under UK and European law

Relevant legislation:

Bonn Convention

Bern Convention

Conservation of Habitats & Species Regulations 2017 (as amended)

s41 Natural Environment & Rural Communities Act 2006 list of Priority species

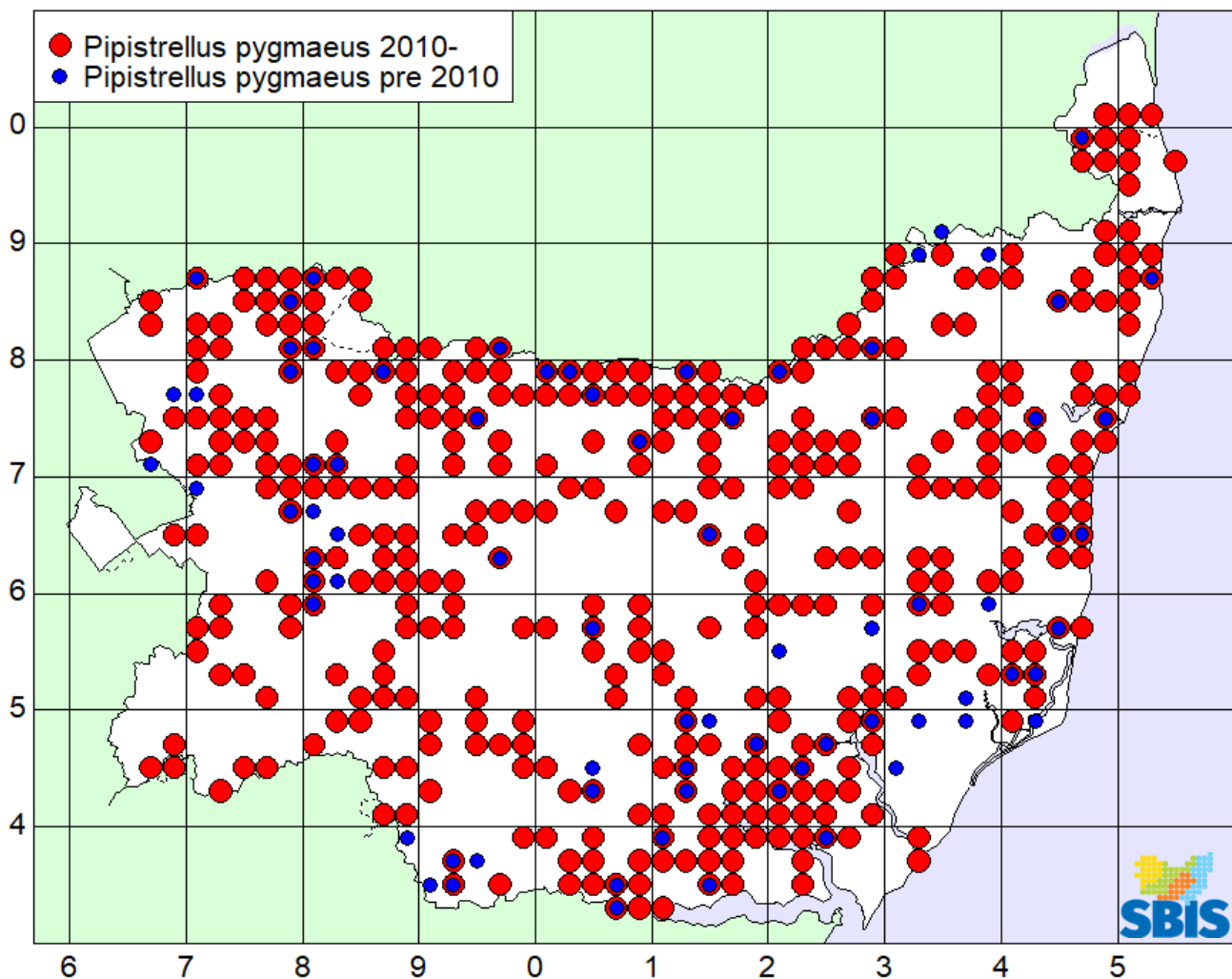
Soprano Pipistrelle bats in Suffolk

The Common and Soprano Pipistrelle were only identified as separate species in the 1990s. The two species look very similar, but can be identified by the frequency of their echolocation calls (Common Pipistrelle peak calls are at 45 kHz and Soprano Pipistrelle peak calls at 55 kHz).

Both of the commoner pipistrelle bat species have a very similar distribution, being found throughout the British Isles. However, recent research has found that Soprano Pipistrelles appear to be quite different from Common Pipistrelles in certain aspects of their biology. They may be more reliant on aquatic

habitats for foraging and many of their known roosts are associated with river valleys (Oakley and Jones, 1998). They also form larger maternity roosts than Common Pipistrelles. The very large summer roost of Soprano Pipistrelles known to exist at Flatford adjacent to the River Stour in South Suffolk, certainly bears out these findings.

The huge increase in records over the past five years is down to the ease of splitting the two pipistrelle species using detector software and not that this species is increasing and spreading its range.



Further information

- **Bat Conservation Trust: Fact sheet, photos and listen to Noctule echolocation**
<https://www.bats.org.uk/about-bats/what-are-bats/uk-bats>
- **The Wildlife Trusts Fact Sheet**
<https://www.wildlifetrusts.org/wildlife-explorer/mammals/noctule>
- **Distribution Atlas for Bats in Suffolk 1983-2016**, published by Suffolk Bat Group, Suffolk

- Biodiversity Information Service and Suffolk Wildlife Trust 2017 available to download at <https://www.suffolkwildlifetrust.org/suffolkbatgroup> or <https://www.suffolkbis.org.uk/bats>
- **Suffolk Bat Group** <https://www.suffolkwildlifetrust.org/suffolkbatgroup>
 - **National Bat Helpline:** 0345 1300 228