



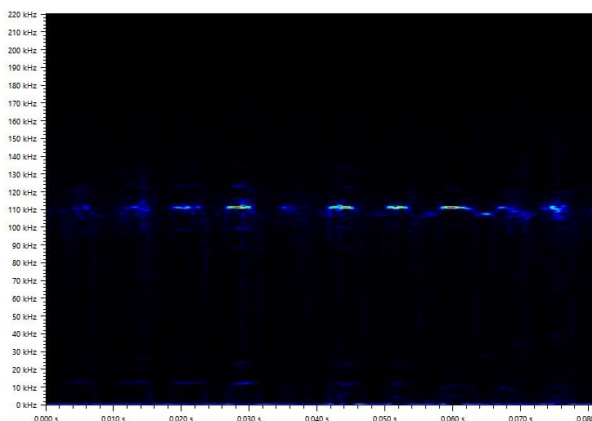
# Lesser Horseshoe

*Rhinolophus hipposideros*

**Snapshot:** rare species; very small, the size of a plum; hangs with wings wrapped around the body, complex noseleaf relates to echolocation.



Lesser horseshoe bat © Arthur Rivett



Lesser Horseshoe bat  
echolocation call (sonogram)

## How to identify a Lesser Horseshoe bat

- **Echolocation:** constant at 110 kHz. Sounds like continuous warbles on bat detector.
- **Size:** small, head & body length 35 - 45 mm
- **Flight pattern:** flies 5 metres above the ground, often circles and takes prey from branches.
- **Distinctive features**  
Emerges 30 minutes after sunset  
Sensitive to disturbance  
Feeding remains in temporary night roosts e.g. porches, tunnel entrances.
- **Colour:** adults pinky buff-brown, juveniles greyish (until a year old)

## Habitat and requirements

- Vegetation in sheltered lowland valleys.
- **Roost sites:** summer colonies in roofs of larger rural houses and stable blocks with range of roof spaces and a nearby cellar, cave or tunnel for inclement weather.
- **Hibernation sites:** caves, mines, tunnels and cellars; prefer high humidity; small numbers in hibernation sites.

## 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

## Threats

- Intensive agricultural practices.
- Disturbance to roosts, especially in nursery and winter roosts
- Sensitive management of foraging habitats very important.

## Lesser Horseshoe bats in Suffolk

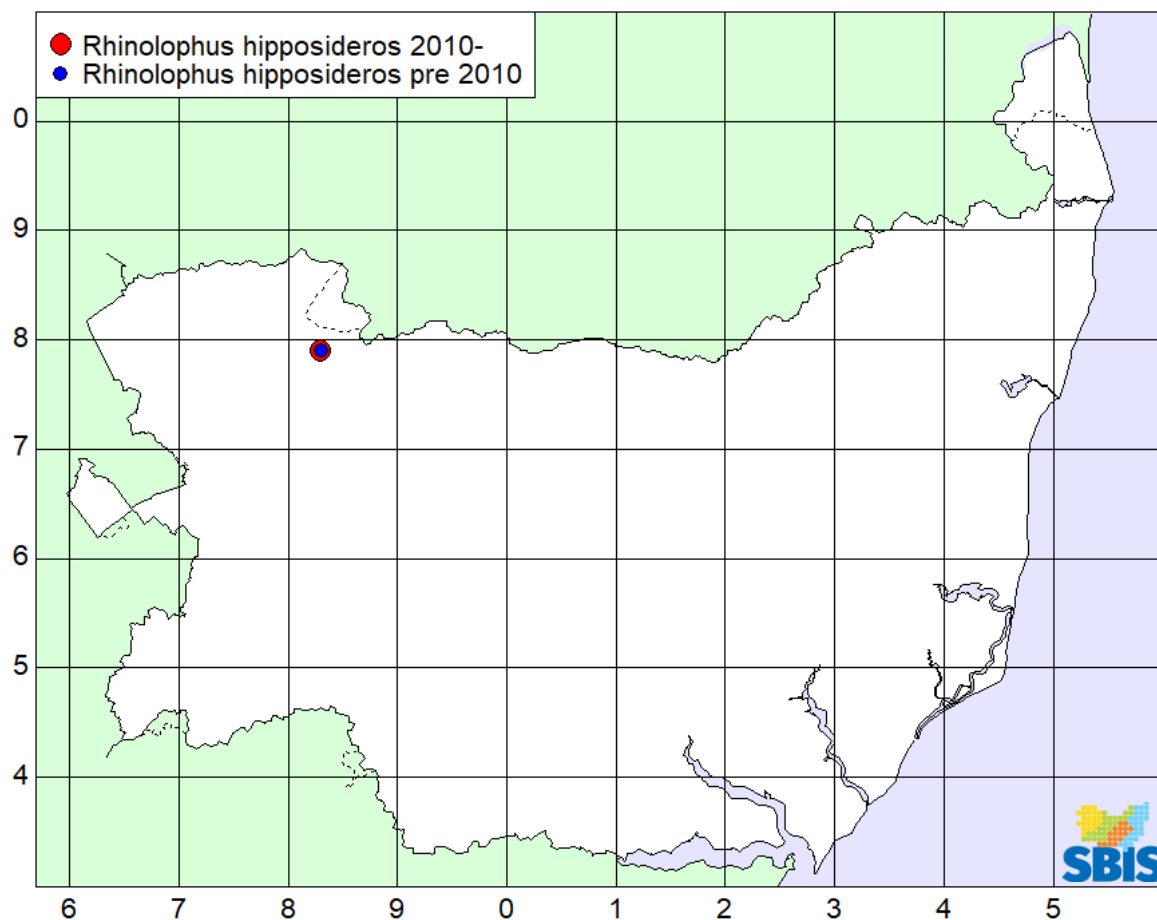
The discovery of a single individual Lesser Horseshoe bat hibernating in Suffolk in 1996 was probably the most exciting find in the history of the Suffolk Bat Group. This bat was found in the same site every winter until 2015 and Sue Hooton saw it move on 15 March 2016, so it was alive then. It has not been recorded since that time. Efforts were made during several summers to locate this bat in suitable habitat near to the hibernation site, but to no avail. Since this individual would now be more than 20 years old, the species may now become extinct in Suffolk.

Prior to this, there had been only one other record of the species in the county in the past 100 years.

The last occurrence was in December 1958, relating to a single animal which was ringed and remained until early 1959.

Lesser Horseshoes are now restricted to Wales and the south-west of England east-wards to Warwickshire, with the nearest known colony some 90 miles from the recent Suffolk site.

Studies have shown these bats rarely travel more than 15km between their roosts and so the appearance of one in Suffolk has always been intriguing. It is unknown whether it was a lost or displaced individual, or whether there is a small population existing somewhere in West Suffolk waiting to be discovered.



## Further information

- **Bat Conservation Trust: Fact sheet, photos and listen to Lesser Horseshoe bat 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/lesser-horseshoe-bat>
- **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