

Bat Activity Survey and Roost Count St. James' Church, Wigmore, Herefordshire 13th August 2025

Note: This report is for information only and should not be used as an Ecological Impact Assessment for planned works whether forestry, renovations or development. This report should not be passed on to any third party (including an ecological consultant) without the express permission of Denise Plume and David Lee.

St. James' Church, Wigmore, Herefordshire (Wigmore Church) has been monitored for bats and swifts since 2014 when the authors, who were then members of the Herefordshire Mammal Group, started the Bats and Swifts in Churches Project ("Project"). In 2015, the Project received grant funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF), with Wigmore church being one of 7 churches to receive boxes; this comprised 2 x 1FS maternity colony boxes, 3 x 2FN domed bat boxes and 2 Type 17 swift boxes. In 2021, two additional swift boxes were purchased using funding received via Herefordshire Ornithological Club from Severn Waste Services. In total, there are approximately 9 natural swift nest sites at the church (under the eaves on the south side of the south aisle) and 4 additional nest boxes sited under the eaves on the south side of the chancel.

The last bat survey Herefordshire Bat Research Group (HBRG) carried out was 9 years ago in June 2016 where 5 species of bats were detected; common pipistrelle, soprano pipistrelle, Natterer's bat, possible longeared and Barbastelle. A roost count was also carried out and 33 Natterer's bats were recorded emerging from the church building. Also in June 2016 a total of 9 active swift nest sites were observed under the eaves of the south aisle, but not all birds came to roost during at the time of the survey. However in 2015, 11 active nest sites were observed so Wigmore church is an important site for both swifts and bats.

Over the years the church congregation at Wigmore has dwindled, and being a large Grade 1 listed building, it is expensive to keep heated and to maintain, so the future of this church remains uncertain. Bearing this in mind on 13th August 2025 HBRG carried out a monitoring check for the bat and swift boxes, an evening roost count and bat activity survey. The objective of the evening survey was to confirm whether the Natterer's bats are still residing inside the church as documented in previous surveys.

Just before we started the survey, we carried out an inspection of the church interior and the bell tower and found a lot less bat droppings than in previous years. We were informed by Fran, our local contact for the church that the number of droppings had decreased generally. Fran also told us that a dead longeared bat was found inside the church by the main entrance door earlier in the year.

WEATHER CONDITIONS

Table 1 documents weather conditions, sunset times, moon rise, moon set and moon phase. Cold nights, a full visible moon and breezy conditions may affect bat activity.

Table 1: Weather conditions for Wigmore Church

Date	Sunset (hrs)	Start Temp	End Temp	Cloud	Wind	Dry/Rain	Moon rise/set (hrs)	Moon Phase
13-Aug-25	20.38	20.8°C	20.0°C	Patch Cloud	Slight Breeze	Dry	Rise 21.57 Set 12.36 (14 th)	79% Visible

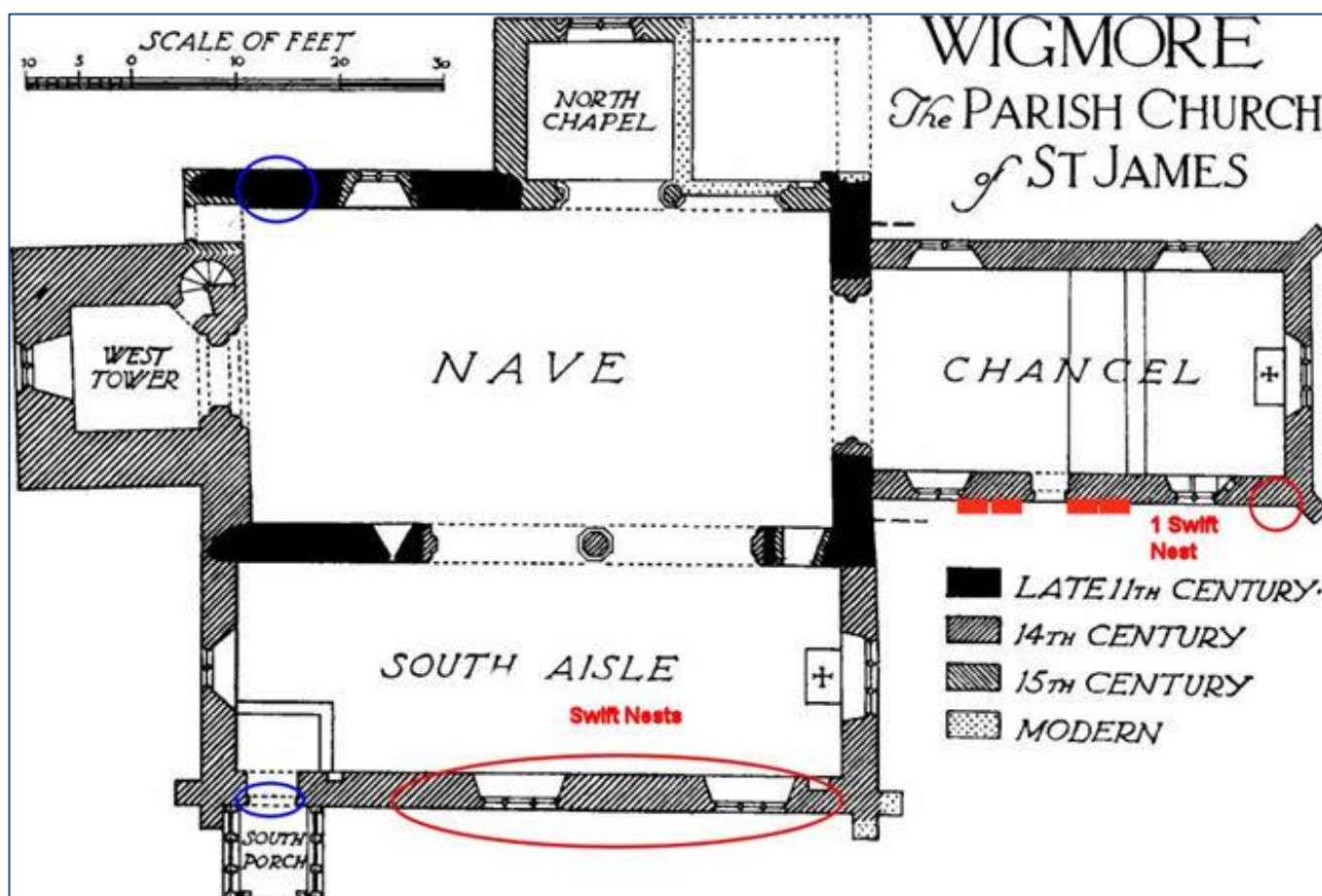


Figure 1: Plan of Wigmore Church showing swift nesting site locations (red circles), swift boxes (red rectangles) and bat access points (blue circles).

EXISTING RECORDS FOR THE SITE

Herefordshire Biological Records Centre (HBRC) Database: There are 28 records of 7 species from 2015 to 2023 available on the HBRC database for Wigmore Church; species include common pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus*), soprano pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pygmaeus*), brown longeared bat (*Plecotus auritus*), Natterer's bat (*Myotis nattereri*), Noctule (*Nyctalus noctula*), barbastelle (*Barbastella barbastellus*) and lesser horseshoe (*Rhinolophus hipposideros*).

Herefordshire Bat Research Group (HBRC) Database: There are 14 records of 6 species from 2015 to 2023 available on the HBRC database for Wigmore Church; species include common pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus*), soprano pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pygmaeus*), brown longeared bat (*Plecotus auritus*), Natterer's bat (*Myotis nattereri*), barbastelle (*Barbastella barbastellus*) and lesser horseshoe (*Rhinolophus hipposideros*).

BAT SURVEY RESULTS

Bat and swift boxes are monitored annually to ensure they are secure and ready for the forthcoming season. However, because Wigmore Church is an outlier for the monitors, due to its distance from where the main monitors live, boxes are not checked frequently and there has been the odd occasion an annual visit has been missed.

Table 2: Results of the bat and swift box inspection that took place at Wigmore Church on 13th August 2025.

Species found Common Name	Box/Roost/Nest Location	Position	Site Box Reference	Signs	Abundance	Comment
Empty	Nave	North Wall (W)	Bat 1FS	None	None	
Bird	Nave	North Wall ('E)	Bat 1FS	Nest		Moss Removed
Bat	Tower	Bell Chamber	Bat 2FN	Droppings	Present	Old droppings inside and under box
Pipistrelle	East End by Yew trees	East Wall	Bat 2FN	Droppings	Present	Droppings old and Fresh
Pipistrelle	Chancel	North-East corner	Bat 2FN	Droppings	Present	Droppings old and Fresh
Natterer's	Nave and South Aisle	Interior	Church interior	Droppings	Present	Myo droppings by door
Bat	Tower	Bell Chamber	Tower Interior	Droppings	Present	Droppings under box
Swift	Chancel	South Wall L1	Swift Type 17	Nest	Present	Nest with feathers
Empty	Chancel	South Wall R2	Swift Type 17	None	None	
Empty	Chancel	South Wall L3	Swift Type 17	None	None	
Swift	Chancel	South Wall R4	Swift Type 17	Live animal	Present	Adult with juveniles

Table 3: Results from bat detectors deployed in and around Wigmore church on 13th August 2025 highlighting local emergence relative to sunset and indicating how bats are using the area.

BAT DETECTORS 20.38 to 22.30	SUNSET	TIME	SPECIES	COMMENTS
SD1A - Rear of Nave - Church Interior (144 Files)	20.38	20.48 to 22.22	Soprano pipistrelle	Local Emergence inside church, social calling, several passes
	20.38	20.59 to 21.51	Myotis species	Local Emergence inside church, probably Natterer's.
	20.38	20.59 to 21.51	Natterer's bat	Local Emergence inside church, mostly recorded
	20.38	21.00 to 22.28	Common pipistrelle	Local Emergence inside church, social calling, several passes

BAT DETECTORS 20.38 to 22.30	SUNSET	TIME	SPECIES	COMMENTS
SD1B – Inside Church- Chancel on Altar (60 Files)	20.38	20.49 to 22.21	Soprano pipistrelle	Local Emergence inside church, several passes
	20.38	20.58 to 22.26	Common pipistrelle	Local Emergence inside church, social calling, several passes
	20.38	20.59 to 21.43	Myotis species	Local Emergence inside church, probably Natterer's and mostly recorded
	20.38	21.17 to 21.24	Natterer's bat	Long Straight broadband calls,
SD2 – Inside Church in North Chapel (130 files)	20.38	20.49 to 22.27	Common pipistrelle	Local Emergence inside church, social calling, several passes
	20.38	21.04 to 21.51	Myotis species	Local Emergence inside church, probably Natterer's, several passes
	20.38	21.04 to 21.51	Natterer's bat	Local Emergence inside church, several passes
AS18 - Outside church in porch facing at main door (157 files)	20.38	20.58 to 22.28	Common pipistrelle	Local Emergence, mostly recorded
	20.38	21.00 to 22.27	Soprano pipistrelle	Local Emergence, social calling, and moderate activity
	20.38	21.23 to 22.22	Natterer's bat	Local Emergence, few passes
AE00 South of church facing towards chancel (204 files)	20.38	20.57 to 22.28	Soprano pipistrelle	Local Emergence, few passes
	20.38	20.58 to 22.28	Common pipistrelle	Local Emergence, social calling, mostly recorded
	20.38	22.02	Barbastelle	Pass
AE12 West side of church facing the tower (54 files)	20.38	20.52 to 22.29	Common pipistrelle	Local Emergence, social calls, mostly recorded
	20.38	20.56 to 21.56	Soprano pipistrelle	Local Emergence, second most recorded
	20.38	21.00 to 21.52	Myotis species	Local Emergence, several passes probably Natterer's bats
AE81 North side of church on drain pipe underneath 1FS box on Nave (24 files)	20.38	20.50 to 22.24	Common pipistrelle	Local Emergence, mostly recorded
	20.38	21.02 to 21.03	Soprano pipistrelle	Local Emergence and 2 passes
	20.38	21.39 to 21.46	Myotis species	Probably Natterers, 3 passes
AE89 - North side of church facing towards 1FS box on Nave east of North Chapel (38 files)	20.38	20.45 to 21.08	Soprano pipistrelle	Local Emergence, social calling and a few passes
	20.38	20.52 to 21.45	Noctule	Local Emergence, 2 passes
	20.38	20.59 to 22.21	Common pipistrelle	Local Emergence, social calling and mostly recorded
	20.38	21.39	Myotis species	2 passes
	20.38	22.02	Barbastelle	Pass

Table 4: Bat species recorded in and around Wigmore church showing their status for roosting, determined by emergence times relative to sunset.

SPECIES RECORDED	HOW BATS ARE USING AREA IN AND AROUND WIGMORE CHURCH 13 AUGUST 2025
Soprano pipistrelle	Probably roosting in/around church building
Common pipistrelle	Probably roosting in/around church building
Natterer's bat	Roosting inside church
Myotis species (Unidentified)	Probably Natterer's bats
Noctule	Foraging/commuting/Visiting
Barbastelle	Commuting

Conclusion

The bat box check on 13th August 2025 revealed some usage by bats in all 2FN bat boxes, one inside the tower and two on the east and north side of the church. The box inside the tower had a mix of droppings both pipistrelle and either Natterer's or longeared bats, whereas the two on the exterior of the church walls had evidence of pipistrelles. The main maternity colony of Natterer's bat still favours the interior of the church but it would seem that the number of bats has decreased, based on the reduced number of droppings and urine splashes. Longeared bats have been also been recorded in low numbers using the interior of the church but there was no evidence or detector recordings of longeared at this years survey.

At the last box check in March 2024, all four swift boxes were used by swifts. This was confirmed by evidence of feeding remains and nesting materials. However, this year just two out of four boxes were in use by swifts. Overall the swift population has decreased compared to previous years and the number of nest sites, excluding the swift boxes once reached 11 but that number has declined. We were not able to carry out an accurate swift count at our August visit as many of the swifts leave for Africa in July. We were lucky to meet a local resident who has offered to carry out a swift nest count for us in 2026.



Figure 2: Adult with 2 juvenile swifts in a swift box installed at Wigmore Church



Figure 3: A swift was observed leaving this swift box when we arrived to monitor it.

When we visited Wigmore church in March 2024 we found evidence of barn owl roosting on the 1FS maternity bat box east side of the North Chapel. A generous amount of faeces and pellets were encountered on and underneath the box. However, there was no evidence of barn owl at the 2025 visit.

It has been 9 years since HBRG last carried out a night-time bat activity survey so it was important to get some up to date information and to see whether the Natterer's bats were still using the building and the same access points as they were 9 years ago. Mid-August is not a good time to get an accurate count for bats, particularly this year; a warm early spring and summer resulted in bats giving birth early and the advancement of growing juveniles meant some colonies were breaking up earlier than usual.

There are two previously recorded emergence points where the Natterer's bats leave Wigmore Church each evening; under the eaves on the north side and the main entrance door on the south side (see Figure 1) which is where we set up our cameras. However, we only captured one bat leaving at eaves level on the north side, but due to equipment failure at the start, and a second camera not being set in exactly the right position, we could not get an accurate count of individuals emerging on the north side of the church. HBRG's David Lee was inside the church and witnessed swarming behaviour of bats high up at the north-west end of the nave suggesting bats were leaving the church on this side of the building, which were missed. However, we did record 12 bats emerging from the main entrance door on the south side.

Due to the reduced number of droppings inside the church and the information we received about bat numbers declining at Wigmore church we were not expecting the same numbers we witnessed in 2016 where 33 Natterer's were counted out. However, on the HBRC database, in July 2017 a total of 37 individuals were counted by a consultant ecologist and in August 2017 the same consultant counted out 63 individuals; the latter number will include juveniles, so numbers at this church have diminished in the last 8 years which is concerning.

Footage of bats leaving the church can be found at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7Lm9QawgyVY>. Detectors deployed around the building recorded soprano pipistrelle, common pipistrelle, Natterer's bat, unidentified *Myotis* (probably Natterer's bat), barbastelle and noctule. We also counted out 12 Natterer's bats leaving the church by the main door.

Overall, a total of 7 new biological records covering 5 species was generated from this bat survey, which will be used in the next edition of the Herefordshire Bat Atlas due to be updated at the end of 2025.

Denise Plume and David Lee

Herefordshire Bat Research Group

Natural England Licenced Bat Worker (Class Licence Levels 3 to 4)

Natural England Licenced Bat Worker for Bat Related Project Work in Herefordshire (trapping, marking, radio tagging, ringing)

Natural England Licence Dormouse Worker

NRW Licenced Bat Worker for all of Wales

Facebook Link : www.facebook.com/HerefordshireBatResearchGroup

Reference:

'Wigmore', in *An Inventory of the Historical Monuments in Herefordshire, Volume 3, North West* (London, 1934), pp. 203-210. *British History Online* <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/rchme/heref/vol3/pp203-210> [accessed 3 July 2016].