

Site name: Caen Valley Bats
Devon

County:

District: North Devon

Status: Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) notified under section 28 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)

Local Planning Authority: Devon County Council, North Devon District Council

National Grid reference: SS 484377

Area: 0.11 (ha)

Ordnance Survey sheet: 1:50,000: 180 **1:10,000:** SS43NW

Date notified (under 1981 Act): 23 September 2002

Reasons for notification:

The site is notified as a nationally important summer maternity roost and winter hibernacula for the greater horseshoe bat *Rhinolophus ferrumequinum*.

General description:

The site is located on the valley slopes of the River Caen, approximately 0.5 kilometres north of the town of Braunton.

The former stable block buildings at Caen Valley Bats SSSI are of importance as a summer maternity roost, where the female bats gather in large numbers to give birth and rear their young. The site is also used as a winter hibernacula by the bats.

The buildings provide an undisturbed, secure roosting site with a range of internal temperatures, which allows usage by the bats throughout the year. The buildings also provide a safe and sheltered space in which the bats can exercise before emerging to feed and where young bats can practice flying. The roost provides suitably sized emergence points, immediately outside of which are banks of trees and shrubs, which provide sheltered and secure flight paths for the bats.

Counts over the past 10 years indicate that the greater horseshoe bat population that uses Caen Valley Bats throughout the year is the second largest known population in England and confirm the site's importance as a maternity roost and hibernacula.

Other information:

The site lies within the Exmoor and Quantocks Natural Area.

All species of bat are listed in Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and Annex IV of the European Community Habitats and Species Directive.