

Novel idea to raise awareness of rare species

Hotel to beam its bats into bedrooms

By STEVE BAGNALL

COUNTRYSIDE chiefs are teaming up with a North Wales hotel to beam images of rare neighbouring bats into guests' bedrooms.

Bodidris Hall, in Llandegla, near Ruthin, has a 160-strong colony of lesser horseshoe bats, an endangered species, in an outbuilding.

Hotel chiefs are now in talks with the Countryside Council for Wales to install infrared cameras and broadcast the pictures onto bedroom TVs.

It forms part of a package of ideas being discussed by the two parties to raise awareness of the rare species, of which there are just 14,000 left in the UK.

And Bodidris Hall chiefs said they were committed to ensure the bats' long term safety and hopefully increase in numbers.

Yesterday CCW bat expert Matthew Ellis said it was possible the bat colony may have existed at the hall for 100 years.

"We are at the beginning of negotiations with a view to installing infra-red cameras to monitor the bats.

"It is also hoped people will be able to see the bats as they emerge from the outbuilding first hand."

Moving indoors

THE lesser horseshoe bat was originally a cave-roosting bat, although most summer maternity colonies now use buildings, particularly old large houses and farm buildings.

Most still hibernate in underground sites such as caves.

In Britain, the lesser horseshoe bat is now



A lesser horseshoe bat

found only in Wales and south-west England.

Current estimates suggest a UK population of 14,000 divided equally between Wales and England.

The lesser horseshoe bat is widespread throughout central and southern Europe, but has undergone severe decline in the northern part of its range.

The rare species was first spotted at the hall, which dates back 650 years, in 1997.

At that time 41-year-old Matthew said there were about 60 there.

He has checked on them regularly every year and today the bats' numbers stand at 160.

Yesterday Bodidris Hall general manager Ed Duley, who took over the job a couple of months ago, said he was keen to promote the bats.

"I made inquiries if it was okay to highlight the presence of the bats at the hall without compromising their safety and was told that would be fine.

"The hotel is now talking to the CCW and in the long term the hall is looking to install infrared cameras.

"We have our own TV system so pictures of the bats can be fed through to guests rooms."

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