

# SCHREIBERS' BENT-WINGED BAT

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Miniopterus schreibersii*

CONSERVATION STATUS: **Near Threatened (NT)**

## FACT FILE

- ORDER: Chiroptera
- FAMILY: Miniopteridae
- BODY LENGTH: 5–6 cm
- WINGSPAN: 30–34 cm
- WEIGHT: 10–16 g
- Strict cave roosting species
- Forms large maternity colonies
- Insectivorous
- Echolocates to hunt
- Mediterranean distribution



As dusk settles over limestone hills the air above a cave entrance begins to stir. Then, almost all at once, hundreds of small dark shapes pour into the evening sky. Schreiber's Bent-winged Bat is a species of scale — a cave-dweller that gathers in numbers rarely seen among European bats. In the karst landscapes of the Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur it roosts deep within caves and abandoned tunnels, relying on stable underground temperatures throughout the year. Unlike many bats that switch between multiple roost types, this species is strongly tied to subterranean sites.



## THE COMMUTING NIGHT WORKER

### BUILT FOR ENDURANCE

Its name comes from the distinctive bend in its long narrow wings, an adaptation that allows fast efficient flight over considerable distances. This is a bat designed to commute. Individuals may travel many kilometres from their cave roost to feeding grounds each night. The wings are slender and pointed, suited to open-air hunting above woodland clearings river valleys and Mediterranean scrub.

### LIFE UNDERGROUND

Females gather in large maternity colonies in spring, sometimes numbering in the thousands. Each gives birth to a single pup which clings to cave ceilings in tightly packed clusters. The stable warmth of the cave environment is critical for the growth of young bats. In winter the species hibernates in caves where temperature and humidity remain constant. Disturbance during this period can cause bats to wake prematurely, using valuable fat reserves needed for survival.

# FEW MAMMALS DEPEND SO COMPLETELY ON THE HIDDEN CAVE SYSTEMS OF SOUTHERN PROVENCE AS SCHREIBERS' BENT-WINGED BAT.

### NIGHT HUNTER

Schreiber's Bent-winged Bats feed exclusively on flying insects, detected through high-frequency echolocation calls. Their feeding flights often take place well above ground, where they intercept moths and other nocturnal insects on the wing.

Because they rely on both safe underground roosts and productive surrounding landscapes, their survival depends on connected habitats rather than isolated protected sites.

### WHERE IT LIVES IN THE PACA REGION

The Schreiber's Bent-winged Bat (*Miniopterus schreibersii*) is closely tied to the limestone landscapes that define much of southern Provence. Its roosts are found in deep caves, fissured cliffs and abandoned underground workings across the Var, Alpes-de-Haute-Provence, Alpes-Maritimes and Bouches-du-Rhône.

Within the region it is associated with protected karst systems and rocky massifs, including areas that fall within or alongside the **Calanques national park, the Verdon regional park** and other limestone plateaux and canyon landscapes that form part of the wider protected network.

These underground roosts are only one part of its story. Each night bats disperse from caves to feed over woodland edges, river valleys, scrubland and open countryside, often travelling many kilometres. The survival of the species therefore depends not only on safeguarding caves, but also on maintaining the ecological integrity of the surrounding landscape.

In the PACA region, this bat is a reminder that protected areas do not function in isolation. What happens above ground is inseparable from what lies beneath it.

### DID YOU KNOW?

Some maternity colonies of Schreiber's Bent-winged Bat in southern Europe can contain several thousand individuals, making them among the largest bat gatherings on the continent.