

Nocturnal Urban Wildlife – Annie Wells MSP

[sound of a Daubenton's bat echolocating]

These strange sounds may sound very alien to you and I, but these calls are a common amongst our urban wildlife, albeit at higher frequencies. These are calls made by some of the UK's smallest mammals – bats!

Hello, my name is Annie Wells. I am a Member of the Scottish Parliament for Glasgow, and I am also the Nature Champion for the Daubenton's bat.

Daubenton's bats are known as 'water bats' as they often skim over the water as they hunt for small flies, like midges. In summer they roost in buildings, tunnels, under bridges and trees, whereas in winter, they hibernate in caves, mines and other underground sites.

There are many mistaken beliefs about bats, which unfairly give them a bad reputation. Perhaps it is because they are nocturnal - which means that they only come out at night. Despite their reputation, bats are very important in our ecosystems and one tiny bat can eat up to 3,000 insects a night!

Step outside at night and a different world emerges in our towns and cities. We all know that city dwellers like foxes and pigeons have adapted well to urban life, but badgers can also occasionally be witnessed in Scotland's towns and cities. These nocturnal creatures emerge from their underground setts under cover of darkness, leaving behind only traces of their nightly activities. Naturally nocturnal hedgehogs, although declining, can also still be glimpsed in some gardens as they go about their nightly business.

Our towns and cities are home to wildlife that people may not be aware of, but they nevertheless play important roles in the places where many of us live. It's important that we make space for nature in our towns and cities, like making sure that bat roosts are protected when building or even using hedgehog-friendly fencing, so that our towns and cities can continue to be home for these different species - whether we're awake to see them or not.