

Bat Parasites

Colin Edwards

Ever wondered what those tiny mites look like that you quite often find living off the bats we look after?



This one was taken from a *Pipistrellus pipistrellus* last year and was passed to someone with an interest in parasitic flies that live on bats. Although mites are not his main interest he has sent a request to the Natural History Museum for an ID. (No response as yet).

Some details are below as to what is being looked for in way of the flies: *Minute to medium sized (1.5-5 mm), yellowish to brown, spider-like, flattened flies without wings. Halteres present. Head small, not adpressed to the thorax but, in resting position, bent backward on to thorax eyes and ocelli small or absent. Legs long with swollen femora and tibiae; first tarsal segment at least as long as all other tarsal segments combined.*

The adults are ectoparasites of bats, feeding on their blood. The larvae develop inside the abdomen of the female fly. Just prior to deposition the female leaves her bat host and glues the mature, almost pupated larva (prepupa) to a solid substrate near the resting place of the bats after which the prepupa fairly rapidly forms a puparium. Nycteribiidae show various degrees of host specificity, ranging from species-species associations, through associations with closely related hosts to apparent absence of any host preference.

This parasite was recovered from *Nyctalus noctula* taken into care on the 3rd of January 2013.

The bat was found in Richmond park and was in a bad way being riddled with maggots. Eventually the decision was taken to euthanise the



bat.

The mite was found attached to the wing membrane and was placed into alcohol to preserve the specimen. The specimen was again photographed by Colin Le Boutiller and clearly illustrates that different bat species do get targeted by different parasites. Happy hunting Colin Edwards If you do happen to find any flies or mite living on a bat you collect, please try to isolate a specimen and pass this to Colin Edwards.

Fly by night

At a recent BNHS recorder's meeting Alan Outen said he was keen to receive any bat parasites. Bob promised to forward any he received but was not that hopeful of getting one.

So just to prove him wrong Aidan found a bat fly on a Natterer's bat at Campton plantation. These are fascinating beasts. They belong to the same order of insects as crane flies and midges, but have become more or less wingless. These insects are usually difficult to spot and harder to remove, but this one came quietly and Bob bore it home triumphantly. Not being an entomologist he had no 70 alcohol. (Readers of the drinking fraternity may like to miss the rest of this sentence), so at last we found a use for the whisky at the back of the cupboard. Alan Outen identified the bat fly as *Nycteribia kolenatii* and sent us this photo. He has also given us some tubes



with 70% alcohol in them. You can also pass specimens onto him via Bob
Photo Alan Outen