

Bats in Beds

April 2016 Volume 109

Newsletter of the Bedfordshire Bat Group

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Editor' Bit

By the time you read this, the bat season will be upon us.

We have continued to work very hard behind the scenes. As hopefully you will see, we have a lot lined up for this season As always I am making my usual plea for people to come out with us and Vicki Godard has written an article about her first year volunteering with the group(see page 3)

This winter has seen the deaths of David Bowie and Alan Rickman, but there have also seen deaths closer to home, with the loss of Betty Clutten in December(see page 4)r and of Bill

Chapkin at the beginning of January, (See page 5) both of whom were founder members of the Bedfordshire Bat Group

A great deal of winter effort has gone into dealing with data. We have had a backlog of records which we have been working into amalgamating all the records. For our new approach to data searches see a page Bob has worked endlessly writing up the results from the Greater Stockgrove Bat Map , which will be made available as a pdf He and I have now done the talk several times., to North Bucks, South Lincs and the Essex Bat Groups We are talking at the Eastern Region

Conference, as well as at ourAGM

I have been trying to update the website, but I still have a long way to go.

I just don't know where the Winter went

In the next issue we will be telling you all about our latest jaunt to Trinidad. We came back with wonderful memories and a humdinger of a bug which we think we caught on the flight.

Apologies for the larger number of typos than usual, I am VERY jetlagged

A digression

As an antidote to Excel spreadsheets, I have rediscovered knitting. A friend of mine has been to Chios working with the refugees there and Geraldine Hogg and I, along with a number of my friends ,made over one hundred toys, which have gone down a storm with the children there oth of us are still knitting as my friend is going back later this month If any of you are able to knit or crochet small toys, please get in touch.



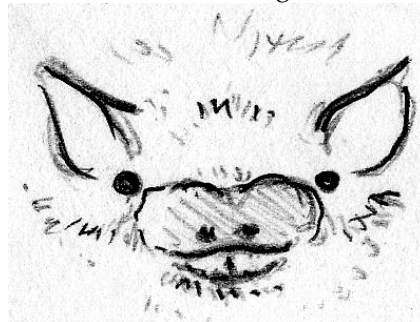
The following have renewed their sub since the last newsletter was published . As usual thanks to those of you who included an additional; donation

Richard Lawrence, Derek and Sarah Neiman, Alex Cole, Colin Carpenter,



Equally I will give a good home to any of your old head torches

Bob Hook, Toby Thorne, Stephen Mason, Sue Raven. Cliff Tack, John Fincham, James Aldridge



New members

Jodie Twose and Jonathan Boocock (Little Stukely) Katie and Tony

Hillman (Leighton Buzzaed Chris,Karen, Ava May and Beatrice Lambert (Baldock) ,Luke , Loraine, Linda and Gary Burgess Dunstable

Thanks to the following contributors to this issue:

David Anderson, Derek Neimann, Gail Armstrong, Martin O'Connor, Bob Cornes, John Day, Gill Clough, Viv Heys, Elaine Rigby, Geraldine Hogg, Gwen Hitchcock,, Merlin Tuttle, Daniel Hargreaves, Jonathan Durward

Fancy a bat walk/survey but unsure about it? Just do it!



Photos Jennie Atwell

Little did I know when I saw an advert for a bat walk evening at Woburn Abbey about 18 months ago that it would open up such an amazing, interesting and friendly world to me. I had no prior knowledge or experience of bats – I hadn't (and still haven't) even seen a Batman film! Yet something about these intriguing little creatures enticed me to book a place with my friend Jennie. And from then on, I've been hooked!

As the warm sun set and we walked around the grounds with our bat detectors, I slowly became aware of a new world, which had always been there but off my radar, and I loved it instantly. And once the detectors started detecting, we soon got the hang of shining our torches to see these

flying mice grabbing their evening meals and going about their everyday' business.

So I might have only had one evening of limited bat experience but there was only one thing for it – to join The Bedfordshire Bat Group and get involved in local bat surveys, and through Facebook and www.bedsbatgroup.org.uk/wordpress, I did just that.

I quickly discovered that it doesn't matter how much or little experience you've got, all that really matters is an interest in bats and enthusiasm to get involved. Fair enough, if you have a PhD in the finer workings of bat biology or habitats, then so much the better. But what use is a PhD if you can't help carry a ladder to get to the bat boxes or can't climb up the ladder to get to the boxes? How can you get to the boxes at all if you can't read the map or use a compass? Who's going to record



the data needed once you've found the boxes? And you can never have enough torches and pairs of eyes and ears to look and listen out for these cuties. So everyone plays their part, even by simply sharing tasks and carrying equipment. Work shared is work quickened. And once you've climbed up to your first bat box, had an excited peek, cleaned it out and monitored any creature inside, it's never too soon to do

visit the next one. Indeed I count myself very privileged to have already met so many of these amazing creatures face to face and not only seen where they live but have cleaned up their homes (I never otherwise say this about housework!!). Luckily, my strengths, I've discovered, are in clearly recording the measurements and notes about each bat we find, so that others can enter the data into their computers. And of all things I can hold a torch still for five minutes across an evening lake to count Daubentons, whilst perched precariously at the water's edge without falling in! So whilst I might not win Mastermind on the fineries of bat echolocation, I still play a helpful part.

It also doesn't matter if you can't go regularly. The beauty of these surveys is that you simply sign up to the ones you can do, whether that's just one or a handful – and stranger things have happened

than getting a taste for it and just having to find time to fit in another one...

And if that's not enough, what's not to like about a

day in the woods with new people that become friends and discovering not only bats but birds, insects, beautiful plants, fungi, mosses, etc and I'll never forget staring my first buzzing hornet in the eye!! There's a beautiful world out there people, so don't tell yourself all the reasons why you shouldn't get involved but instead the reasons why you should!

Vicky Goddard

In Memoriam



We were very sorry to hear of the death of Betty Clutten at the age of 89 following a short illness. Betty also was at the meeting which led to the founding of the Bedfordshire Bat

Group.

Betty was a lifelong member of the BNHS

I only knew her for about ten years. She used to attend AGMs and the visit to John Adams' roost always bearing a cake offering. She drove herself in her much loved white mini, and in recent years found driving in the dark difficult so was given a lift by Geraldine and Dick Hogg.

She was an ardent record keeper and every year sent in reports of bats she had seen in her garden

David Anderson knew her for longer and has written a lovely obituary for the BNHS, I am shamelessly

Knicking part of it

"Away from Natural History, Betty was born in the same Luton house that she lived in for the rest of her life. She went to Luton High School

for Girls, finishing as Head Girl and being classed as a 'high achiever'.

She then trained as a Teacher and taught Geography and Art at Challney High School and Stopsley High School. Away from work, Betty was an active member of a Fiddle Group and was a keen dancer with the Leasiders Folk Dancers. At Betty's funeral, her cousin recounted that the only concession Betty made to modern life was that she had a car and a telephone. Betty never had a radio or a TV, never mind a computer or an iPhone, but she did read The Times every day!

Betty was one of those quiet people who we all knew and seemed to have always been there, but actually never knew well. You and your smiles will be missed Betty. Continue dancing in a better place."

We shall miss you Betty

Stockgrove Survey

Monday 4th April sees the first Stockgrove survey of the year, & this year we're planning to add in some extra surveys to collect more data following last year's BatMap. As well as doing the Daubenton's count at Stockgrove Lake we're also doing it at Black Pond & Rushmere Lake to see if & how the counts correlate.

To do this it would be great to have more hands on board so if you've been thinking of joining us there this is the perfect time to come along



has taken place with three new members brave enough to meet us. They were rewarded with Natterer's and Daubenton's in bat boxes, but there were no Daubenton's flying over any of the 3w lakes during our new survey. Come on guys don't be shy



Gwen Hitchcock

Above: Black Pond Left: Gwen at the New Daubenton's spot at Rushmere

Photo Bob Cornes

#Editor's note: Over the Winter Bobs Hook and Cornes have checked the state of the wooden boxes at Stockgrove. They have only needed minor repairs and were now awaiting the return of the brown long eareds and their watchers This is an ideal site to hone your bat detector skills The first survey of the year

Bill Champkin In Memoriam

He was a lifelong visitor to Harrold Odell and Priory and was a real

gadget fiend, as the photo on the front cover suggests
In the 25th anniversary issue in Jan 2014 we wrote about the beast he used

I asked Bill to reminisce on those early days. Bill bought one of the first ever bat detectors a Holgate Ultrasonic Receiver. These were bespoke detectors which were made to order and the very basic version which Bill's dad bought him

cost over £700 in the late 1970s. It was similar to modern day detectors in how it worked, but there was a separate beat frequency oscillator for listening to bats such as Horseshoe Bats and Noctules It was large-so large it had to be carried on your chest and had a separate microphone. It also had the advantage that you could buy a microphone that could be used for listening to whales and dolphins—

Not something that was in abundance in Bedfordshire

It was powered by a large square Ever Ready battery. The microphone Was run on 8 dry cell batteries

When his sons were born Bill drifted away from the Bat Group, but in recent years returned, often accompanied by one or both of his sons, Alex and Rhys, and by Lesley.

One thing that Bill had never seen was a barbastelle and Bob invited him along to a known hot spot and to Bill's delight, the barbastelles

recognised a true bat lover, and flew into the net for him. There is sadly no picture of Bill's expression but his smile lit up the wood.

Later in 2014 he came to a trapping session at Ampthill Park, bringing Alex with him. One again the barbastelles played ball and Bill was heard to "complain" that it wasn't fair he had had to wait twenty years to see one and it wasn't fair that Alex saw one the first time he tried.

Bill also came out Nathusius hunting at Priory, and again the Champkin luck held. But Bill did not care if a bat was a rarity or not and he never tired of watching them in flight and listening to them on his detector. Over the years he upgraded this, and I remember vividly him demonstrating his latest all singing all dancing detector, which slipped into his pocket and didn't need any huge batteries lugging about.

Bob was also actively involved in bat care throughout his life and was a real asset to Soggy, taking over the long term care of bats over winter. His dad built him boxes for the bats many years ago and these are now in use by the bat carers amongst us. Because of his experience he was an excellent source of advice. We were absolutely delighted when he offered to join the committee in April 2015. Sadly he only attended a single meeting before this diagnosis. When Bob and I went to visit him, his main regret was that he would be unable to come to the BatMap, but we tried to keep him updated as to what was happening. W had made plans if he wanted to come for a short while, but sadly his illness meant that he tired very quickly and was not able to attend.

He was, however, able to attend Alex's wedding

He died peacefully in early January Bill leaves a huge hole in the world, but we hope his ami8ly will still feel able to join us



*Bill's first barbastelle sighting
Photo Bob Cornes*

We are very sad to report that Bat Group member Bill Champkin had died of an inoperable brain tumour. It was only diagnosed last summer and Lesley, his wife, asked us not to pass the information on at the time. Bob and I went to the funeral where more than 150 people gathered to pay their respects. We really only knew Bill as a bat enthusiast, but he was obviously much more than that, we only saw a facet of the man. Lesley called him a diamond and there were so many sides to it, all of which shone bright He has left a huge hole in people's lives.

He was one of those who was present at the inaugural meeting of the Bedfordshire Bat Group and indeed had been the main bat worker until Tony Aldhous and Joan Childs moved to Beds.

Grand Designs

Gill Clough has been building a dream house and has made a dream house for bats



One day, several years ago now, we hit upon an idea of building our own house. It seemed quite sensible at the time. We'd been trying to find a nice house and couldn't find anything we liked, so self-build seemed the obvious choice. I'd always been a fan of Grand Designs, so how hard could it be? The answer is, not hard, but certainly more difficult than we expected.

Finding a suitable plot was the first challenge. Getting planning permission to use agricultural land for building is problematic for individuals, though it seems to be easy for big building corporations. Instead, we started looking for a rundown dwelling or building that we could demolish and replace. This approach is much more successful with the planners. Having found a suitable bungalow, we set about getting drawings done and applying for planning permission. The process of applying for planning permission is relatively straightforward, however with all demolitions, you have to have environmental surveys. These include a bat survey.

The building plot is in a wood, so as



expected we had bats in the loft. There were traces of bat poo which we had analysed and turned out to be brown long-eared bat poo. We had three bat surveys over a period of 3 weeks and we spotted one BLEB and saw pips emerging from several points in the house.

Planning permission was duly granted, but one of the conditions was the provision of suitable bat mitigation measures. As one of the species detected was a BLEB, we needed to provide something big enough for them to fly around in as we were told that their preference was for barns or long loft spaces. The house style we had chosen was a timber-framed German design where the whole of what would usually be a loft is incorporated into the living space. This meant that once we had demolished the old house, there would be no roost available in the new house. Often, in such cases, a roof space, such as a garage loft space, is designated for bat use, however the garage design was flat-roofed – no bat residence was possible there. Our only choice was to build a free standing bat house in

the garden that was big enough for a BLEB to fly around in – 5m by 3m.

The first challenge was to get a plan for a bat house. Our architects had no idea what a bat house should look like, and drew on the plans something that looked like a low 5m by 3m garden shed with no windows. Looking at this, I couldn't see how it would be at all attractive to BLEBs as the roof was quite near to the ground, so I set about finding plans for a bat house on stilts, effectively a freestanding bat loft.

Having sourced some drawings, finding somebody to build the structure was the next problem. Most carpenters didn't want to touch the project. It took months to locate a firm who had built several bat lofts before and engage them. The cost was horrendously high – over £10K, but we had to have a bat house that would do the job, and this team had a track record of producing bat houses that had all the facilities that today's modern bat could desire.



The location for our Bat Hilton was in the woods at the end of the garden, which is at the bottom of a very steep hill. The team who arrived to erect the bat loft were at first dismayed by the steepness of the slope. Then they developed a canny way to get the materials down the slope – they just slid them down the hill. The team took about a week to erect the full structure. During this time, I noticed laundry drying and evidence of camp fire barbeques. At one point I did wonder if they had moved into the bat loft themselves!

Having seen the finished structure, I can see why it was so expensive. There are entrances at both gable ends as well as slightly bowed boards mid-way down the roof section to make further entrances. Inside there are tailor made gaps for teeny bats to roost in. There is also felt for them to grip onto and move around on. Also, the team who built it were not local and had to find accommodation during the bat loft build, so that added to the cost.

When I popped my head into the bat loft while the bungalow was being demolished (with the bat worker who was onsite as the roof was removed in case any bats were found) the bat loft was stuffed full of moths but no bats. I imagined the moths would be a readymade buffet for bats.

Our well-equipped bat Hilton was completed in July 2015. I returned with Bob in February 2016 to check



out the structure. No bats yet.

We are planning to monitor this year to see the extent to which such a structure does what it is supposed to. We've been discussing what to monitor with Bob. I've got some infra-red cameras with motion

triggers which should be interesting, and Bob has suggested recording and downloading the bat calls and measuring the inside and outside temperature.

Would I build a bat loft again? Absolutely! I wouldn't have necessarily chosen to spend all that money, but if it had to be spent, then I'm delighted to have spent it on a bat loft. I look forward to sitting with a G&T of a summer's evening watching for bats. It looks for all the world like a little folly at the bottom of the garden, and is certainly a good talking point.

Gill Clough



Once the bats have moved in, Gill has offered to let us go and watch them emerge- but you will have to bring your own G and T



February Committee Meeting



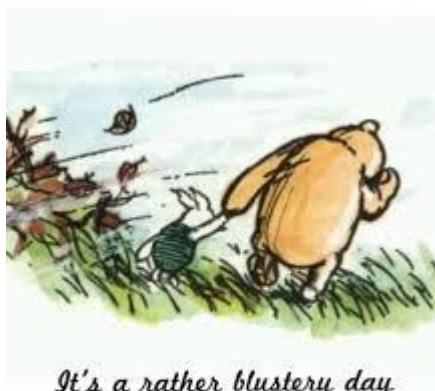
The first committee meeting of the year is always the most hectic as we try to make decisions for the coming year.

Committee 2016

One of the main tasks is to decide on the committee for the following year before the AGM, where other people can volunteer to join. We have two new volunteers, Nicky Monsey and Antonio Morano, both of whom emerged from the meeting with new responsibilities.

Harrold Odell

Kelly who runs the surveys here is not able to access her phone during the working day. Nicky who works as a ranger at HOCPO has offered to be a point of contact for members and will also liaise with the Friends of HOCPO.



We have all been well aware of the windiness that has come with this winter. Soggy reported that the polytunnel cover had taken flight, but she was able to intercept its flight and hopefully it will be undamaged when she returns it to its natural home.

Spending frenzy

A regular February task is deciding what equipment if any we buy this year. Last year we did not have a major expenditure but consolidated our basic equipment. So of course people were looking to spend some money. There is no doubt that the harp trap and lure very useful and had resulted in the collection of a lot of data. Daniel Whitby was importing both at considerable saving and looking at our finances

we decided we could afford one of each, especially as the harp trap we borrowed from BCT last year has to go home to be used for the Nathusius survey



As the meeting drew on we stopped for the inevitable cake and biscuits and the resulting sugar high resulted in some silly minutes. Geraldine had brought some soft toys she was giving Jude for the Syrian refugees and of course we got sidetracked into playing with them. We naturally took some photos of the bats she had knitted, and made sure we had photos of them in gloved hand.



We have been asked by BCT to ensure that we don't put photos of bats in of bats in ungloved hands on the website or on social media, as this is in breach of the partnership agreement (it was in the small print in a document we hadn't seen) The committee had no choice but to go with this, but it is something we have raised with BCT. Any photos of bats in silly gloves will be happily received, particularly if it is in chain mail.

Bedfordshire Bat Group Committee February 2016

Meetings are held three times a year in Ampthill and any member is welcome to attend. The

remaining meetings are on June 6th and October 17th

Tony Aldhous Sandy	<i>Treasurer, Membership Secretary</i> and Sandy Warren Survey leader Data searches.	tony_bbg@aldhous.me.uk
Bob Cornes* Ampthill	Woodland survey co-ordinator, BNHS bat recorder, Roost visitor Maintenance of bat data base. , Natural England Roost Visitor	bob@judeandbob.bbmax.co.uk Tel 01525 403951 Mob 07845 23243
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Viv Hey Luton	Luton Box checks	v.heys@tesco.net>
Jude Hirstwood Ampthill	<i>Secretary</i> , Events Co-ordinator, Roost visit co-ordinator, Website, , newsgroup	jude@judeandbob.bbmax.co.uk Tel 01525 403951 Mob:07951 072691
Gwen Hitchcock Amersham	Stockgrove co-ordinator	gwen.hitchcock@gmail.com>
Dick Hogg Luton	Luton survey co-ordinator (with Geraldine Hogg,) Bat carer	Tel:01582 414057
Aidan Matthews* Biggleswade	NBMP co-ordinator, Bat carer, Roost visitor , Natural England Roost Visitor	Mob 07734 478455
Antonio Morano, Huntington	Data searches	antonioJ.Moreno@hotmail.com
Nicky Monsey, Kempston	HOCP surveys& HOCP bat box survey ⁸ Data searches	Mob 07867 790 419 Tel 01234 72001
Martin O'Connor Luton	Bat carer, Natural England Roost Visitor . Bat care team	Mob 07986 375814
Jo Rigby Bedford	Bat carer	
Kelly Robinson	Harrold Odell Survey co- ordinator, Bat carer	07903 756477
Soggy Sabiniarz* Willington	Bat care co-ordinator Lakeside survey co-ordinator Roost visitor. Data searches	07870 747038

*Kelly is not able to receive calls when she is at work, and Nicky has offered to be an additional contact point

Data Searches



The amount of data the bat group collects continues to increase. This is great but has a downside. All the sonograms have to be checked and all the records have to be entered on the database. This is made worse by the fact that not everyone is able to do their sonogram analysis fast (the penalty of having to work for a living combined with wanting a life)

Bob Cornes is the BNHS recorder for bats so he has to verify all the records. He has also been doing all the data searches which came in from consultant.

In recent years the number of requests has grown steadily and there has been a long delay in getting some surveys done. because of the sheer volume of searches involved

As this is how the bat group gets the income to buy equipment (and cake), we knew that we needed to make some changes and involve more people.

At the beginning of the year Jude, Danny and Bob had a three hour meeting in which we identified the blockages and it was a major item on the committee agenda.

It was quickly decided that we did not want to pass the task over to the Biological Record Office as we would receive no income at all of which

would limit what activities we could carry out in the future

I think Bob was dreading the deadly silence when volunteers were sought, but the committee came up trumps, Soggy and Nicky as going to take over dealing with Consultants and Danny, Danny and Antonio have offered to help with the data searches.

In February Bob Jude, Danny, Nicky and Soggy got together to work out the fine detail of exactly how requests were to be dealt with

At present requests are routed through the bnhs website, which only Bob has access to and so we have set up a new e mail address on the website , which Nicky and Soggy can access.

Jude has updated the relevant page on the website

It is going to take some time for consultants onto this new address, so Bob will continue to monitor the BNHS e mail.

He is already taking delight in forwarding them to Nicky and Soggy.

We have decided that we will continue to update the database annually, as this is what most biologic al record centre do As always we make the data freely available to the Greensand Trust, Bedfordshire Borough and Central Bedfordshire Councils, the Bat Conservation Trust and the Wildlife Trust on the understanding that they do not pass it to a third party.

Jude will continue to enter data onto the annual database, which Bob as bat recorder, can then verify. By the time you read this we hope to have put all the 2014 records together and most of the 2015. This is because people are still sending us data for last year, because people find it hard to find the time to analyse their sonograms.

We hope that we will be able to provide a much improved service in the years to come.

If any-one else is willing to help out do please get in touch. Folk doing data searches need to be good with the much dreaded excel spreadsheets as the actual data search is intimidating to some-one doesn't know excel

Dealing with the consultants is less complex and we will provide training. It doesn't matter how much or how little you do. What does matter is that if you don't have time you say so, (just like bat care and roost visiting.).

If reading this you realise that you still have data to pass on, Even if it is several years old, please feel free to do so.

I promise to sob quietly!

New harp trap and lure

We are now proud possessors of both and are about to buy a new computer to run the lure software, a suitable case to keep the lure in and a bag in which to carry the harp Now all we need to do is collect the data for 2016

New Bat Detectors



Bob and Jude were stopped in the street by a bat group member who has just brought a shiny new bat detector but needs help analysing the results she and her husband obtain. We have promised to go round one afternoon and give them a crash course, which will hopefully lead to yet more information about the bats in Ampthill Park

More on data.

As we gather more and more data, so the amount of time we spend entering it on the database has increased. The task is made more complex if we are doing a moving survey as those of us with a GPS have it as a separate unit and have to convert this to grid references. Bob has written a spreadsheet that does this, but it is still quite time consuming. Danny has solved the problem by treating him to an echometer touch and an iPod mini2 cellular which has a built in GPS. He hopes this will allow him to pinpoint locations during the river survey with greater accuracy and with a significant reduction in the time it takes to get the data onto a spreadsheet friendly form.

Getting into the 21st century



For ages Danny has been extolling the merits of GIS software. Bob spend some time trying to understand it but found the jargon largely incomprehensible. Danny, the ex computer whizz, took on the challenge and spent an evening teaching Bob the basics. Bob is now a convert and is happy as Larry producing maps the easy way. You will see more of these in the

issues to come. You can see an example of his work in the Sandy Warren turbine article as well as in the Greater Stockgrove Report and his talk at the AGM

Places are limited on the River surveys so you need to book fast when the dates are announced. It is a fabulous experience with bats whizzing past you as some other poor sod provides the muscle power



Chiropt trivia



This amazing bat above is to be found on a carousel at Detroit zoo



The Sandy Warren Wind Turbine



Photo Bob Cornes

The bat group has been carrying out surveys at Sandy Warren for many years now, and when we got wind of the turbine in 2014 we started monitoring the area adjacent to the turbine field.

Tony Aldhous who runs the survey makes a recording of all the calls he hears and then painstakingly analyses all these calls to identify them as far as possible. This is a time consuming task, but a very worthwhile one.

The map above is of the results for 2014 and you can see the bat diversity is good.

We were asked to comment when the turbine was first mooted and we had some concerns about the number of Noctule passes close to the turbine. Noctules are high flying bats that are often affected by wind turbines. Now that we have two years of pre-turbine data, we hope to be able to monitor any effect the turbine has. In addition to the three regular surveys we are also planning to do some mist netting and harp trapping later in the season- see the newsgroup for details.



The Bat Group has been carrying out surveys at Sandy Warren, the RSPB headquarters for many years. When this wind turbine was first mooted, we were involved in discussions with the RSPB at the planning stage. For the last two years we have been surveying the area adjoining the turbine. The RSPB also worked with the Bat Conservation Trust at the planning stage. We shall continue to monitor this area to see if there is any noticeable impact on bats at the site.



Bob was invited to the launch meeting on Monday, and the Bat Group got an honourable mention. (Well actually the Bedfordshire Bat Group Trust, but hey ho). Bob got talking to the Chief Ecologist at Ecotricity whose turbine it is. The siting of the turbine is such that it

should provide half the electricity used by all the RSPB will be met by the turbines. The turbine is set to turn off around dusk. In addition, they are placing a state of art detector on the nacelle, which sends data electronically. It is hoped that if bat activity is high the turbine will be turned off. The siting of the turbine means that that it produces so much energy that it is still economically viable if it is turned off at night for long periods of time

Ecotricity are doing post installation monitoring, including corpse searches. The chief ecologist is interested in our results and we will be sending both the 2014 and 2015, once Tony has finished analysing this year's data (a mammoth task)

Bob spent a morning being interviewed on a blustery day by Reuters for an on line newscast. After several hours of hanging about the final result was a single sentence from him

If you are willing to help out with this monitoring, come along to one of the regular surveys. We also hope to do a trapping session in some of the nearby woodland. We will post details on the newsgroup

Wildlife Crime Unit gets a reprieve



There was widespread disquiet when the government announced it was closing down the Wildlife Crime Unit as a cost cutting exercise. Several petitions were launched

Britain is a hub for the international illegal wildlife trade, and in 2015 alone the NWCU orchestrated the

seizure of more than 400 items banned under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES). It also helps coordinate the work of police forces around the country combating domestic wildlife crimes such as hare coursing and the persecution of birds of prey.

The unit only costs £427,000 a year to run, with the Home Office and the Department for Farming, Environment and Rural Affairs (Defra), providing £136,000 each.

Chief Inspector Martin Sims, who leads the unit, has met with ministers but told *The Independent* he has had no assurances on its future. He said that without the funding "there would be no unit".

At the end of February it was announced that the funding would be continued

"In recognition of the important contribution the unit makes to tackling wildlife crime, both at home and abroad, I can confirm that Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (Defra) and Home Office ministers have agreed [to] each provide funding of £136,000 a year for the next four financial years," said Stewart. "This will give the unit significant financial stability and enable their vital work to continue until at least 2020."

Stewart also said Defra would provide up to £29,000 a year for four years for specific work to tackle [wildlife crime carried out online](#), a growing area of activity. The overall funding of the unit will remain at the same level as before.

Bat Walks



We get asked to go a number of bat walks during the year. These walks are nominally led by one of our more experienced members, but we do encourage other members to come along to help. All you need to be able to do is tune a bat detector and the ability to tell a pip from a non pip is an advantage. Danny does a number of walks at Priory each year, and we normally get lots of bats. We like to have a mob of us as people are sometimes hesitant to ask the "expert" and often need help

Adjusting the detector. If you can be enthusiastic about bats that's a real advantage. We do not expect you to be able to answer every question, often the people seen as experts can't. If in any doubt just refer the question on. It will also give you a chance to practice identifying bats with a detector and you'll get a free badge.

Go on be brave, volunteer!



White nose syndrome found in Washington State

This detection is about 1,300 miles from areas where white-nose syndrome has been confirmed in Minnesota and where the fungus has been found in Nebraska. Also of note on the map today is the first time the fungus that causes white-nose syndrome being confirmed in the state of Rhode Island?



Bats and hearing

This pallid bat was not used by the experimenters, <https://www.flickr.com/photos/danielpneal/11362424926> but it has lovely ears! Picture Daniel Neal

With so many stimuli in the world, the brain needs a filter to determine what's important," said Melville J. Wohlgenuth, the lead author of the new study "The bat brain has developed special sensitivities that allow it to pick out sounds from the environment that are pertinent to the animal. We were able to uncover these sensitivities because we used the perfect stimulus-the bats own vocalizations."

In this latest study, the researchers experimented with five brown bats, playing them a variety of sounds while monitoring their midbrain activity. They played recordings of natural chirps, the actual sounds bats made as they hunt. They also played artificial white noise and sounds between the two extremes. All of these sounds were identical in amplitude, duration and bandwidth.

While sensorimotor neurons in the bat midbrain reacted to all of the sounds, the neurons involved in stimulus selection, those that guide orienting behaviors, responded selectively to a subset of the natural chirps. And because all mammals share a basic brain organization, the findings suggest how mammals, including humans, choose which stimuli deserve attention.

"Bats produce the sounds that guide their behaviors, and consequently, we know what signals are important to them," said Cynthia Moss, one of the researchers. "By comparing activity patterns of neurons to biologically natural and artificial sounds, we learn general principles of sensory processing that apply to a broad range of species."

The findings are published in the journal *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*.

http://www.eurekalert.org/pub_releases/2016-02/jhu-wbr022316.php

LUTON BAT BOXES PROJECT 2016



Martin O'Connor puts up bat boxes in Wardown Park

During 2011 a number of boxes (Kent and Schwegler 2F) were put up in trees in several open spaces in the borough of Luton.

These are in Wardown Park, along the River Lea, plus some other sites.

Malcolm and I have done some preliminary surveys to locate the boxes and assess their condition, we have had limited success but hope that by April we can plan to check the boxes for bat activity at least 3 times during the upcoming season.

Dates will be posted on the newsgroup and help will be requested to undertake this work. Please wait until plans are finalised before registering to help with this survey.

Many thanks
Vivienne Heys

NB the boxes will be checked from the ground. There is no need to climb ladders

Bat Lit



An Enemy at Green Knowe". Lucy M Boston.

This is one of a series of 6 children's books published between 1954 and 1976 illustrated by her son Peter Boston. Some of the stories feature Toseland, a boy called Tolly for short, and his great-grandmother Mrs. Oldknow. Green Knowe is inhabited by the spirits of people who lived there in ages past,

"They dusted, and took Tolly's find to the window. It was nastier in full daylight than he had realized, like an unclean piece of a mummy. The claws were still on the corners making hooks to hang it up by. It was indeed a bat book. The skin had been cured and dried, the wings stretched to their full extent. The bat's furry back was the leather that joined them. Inside in dim and dirty but slightly phosphorescent white paint there was writing. A bat's wing makes a small sail shaped page. The first was taken up with these words -

THE LANGUAGE KNOWN TO US
AS CROSSING THE RIVER

The other side was filled with strange signs, over each of which someone had written in a browning black that looked

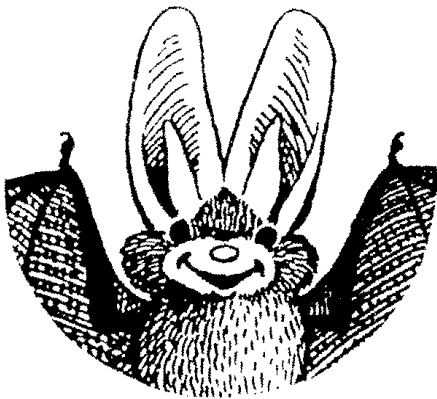
like blood much smaller letters now almost invisible.



"It's a witch's code!" said Tolly in triumph. "No it's an alphabet. And it goes backward. Look A is at the end."

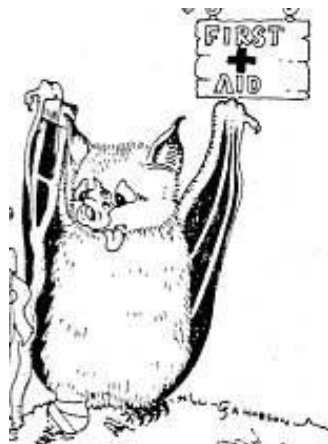
Many thanks to Geraldine Hogg who found this

Congratulations



Gwen Hitchcock and Aidan Matthews have both recently promoted at the Wildlife Trust for Beds, Cambs and Peterborough. Both working incredibly hard getting used to their new posts

Jo Makin and Alex Cole have just been awarded their Level 2 Class Licence. Both work as consultants and have been gaining bat experience with the Bat Group



Soggy Sabiniarz and Kel

Robinson have both successfully applied for Natural England licences to keep bats as long term captives. Thanks to Martin for reference writing



the end of the summer,
The man's a masochist

Martin O'Connor

has passed his PGCert in Business and He is now thinking about the PGDip at

Rachel Bates has successfully completed a tree climbing course. We now have a member of tree climbers and are planning a day in Kings Wood before all the leaves come out. If you are a qualified tree climber, get in touch
Jonathan Durward climbing a tree last spring in Kings Wood, looking for potential roosts





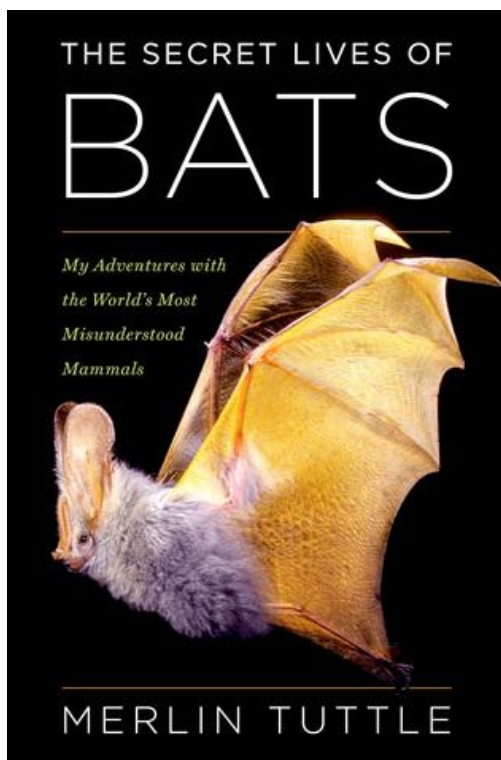
A pollen-gilded bat emerging from a flower of the blue mahoe tree demonstrates the carrying capacity of fur. This bat lives in eastern Cuba in a colony more than one million strong—a pollinating powerhouse.

PLANT: TALIPARITI ELATUM

BAT: PHYLLONYCTERIS POEYI

Photo Merlin Tuttle

Merlin is keen to overcome the negative press that bats get and you will get notifications of media misrepresentation so that you can contact the miscreants to complain. This is already leading to the press having to publish retractions



this long career. He makes Indiana Jones seem like a couch potato, with his understated account of his many adventures in pursuit of bats. He describes events in a very low key way; finding himself at gunpoint when he discovered the bat cave he was exploring was the site of an illegal still making moonshine. Going caving with a total disregard for Health and Safety and finding himself in complete darkness deep in a cave when his light ran out. I could go on, but I don't want to spoil it for you.

Along the way you get a glimpse of the remarkable things he has done for the bat world, but this is very much a throw away and is totally lacking in ego

It is a rollicking good read and shows what a single minded enthusiastic bat lover can achieve. What's not to love?

Merlin Tuttle has recently published a new book As soon as it arrived Bob disappeared into it, so that I only got my mitts on it when we were in Trinidad. I read it on our balcony overlooking the Caribbean Sea, which may have biased my view somewhat.

This is not a text book but an account of the derring do adventures of Merlin throughout

A record-breaking bat discovery in Romania

February 2015. Lots of snow and sunshine. Temperature well below zero. A typical winter in south-western Romania. What is not so typical is the happiness of nine slightly frozen cavers, who have been tiptoeing around for over an hour in order to close the complex gate system of one of the most well-protected caves in Romania. Our team has just finished the winter survey of Topolnița Cave, a spectacular underground environment in the Mehedinți Mountains. And we are



(*Rhinolophus ferrumequinum*) in Europe.



overjoyed, because in the process we have discovered probably the largest colony of the greater horseshoe bat

Credit: Szilárd Bücs.

We say probably, because at that

stage the exact size of the colony had yet to be determined. Photographs were taken, to minimise on-site disturbance of hibernating bats, and a painstaking one-by-one count followed at home, on PCs and laptops. The end result exceeded every expectation: on site, the colony was estimated to comprise around 4,000 individuals (a huge number in itself), but the final count yielded 7,482 greater horseshoe bats. This number means that the colony is by far the largest aggregation of this species in Europe, and is also high on the list of the biggest colonies of all five European horseshoe bat species.

Credit: Szilárd Bücs .Source <http://www.fauna-flora.org/a-record-breaking-bat-discovery-in-romania/>

Hibernation Surveys roundup

January

Photos Jonathan Durward

January's hibernation survey was yet another record, with a total of 207 bats. The breakdown was:

127 Natterer's
55 Daubenton's
1 *Myotis* sp.
20 Brown Long-Eareds
4 Barbastelles

Thanks to Gwen and Danny for leading, and to Chantal, Juliette, Andrew, Claire, Emily, Alex, Luke and Maddy for helping.

February

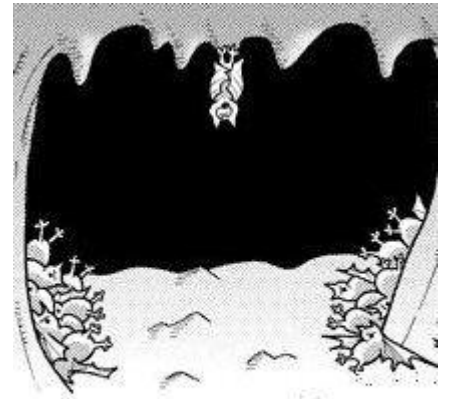
The final tally was 206 bats for the weekend (133 Natterer's, 45 Daubenton's, 1 unidentified *Myotis*,



22 Brown Long-Eared, 1 Barbastelle and 4 unidentified). This just one few lower than January, which was a record.

Thanks to Danny Fellman, Mark Ricketts, Jonathan Durward Nicky Monsey, Emily Costello. Tommy Root and Gill Clough for their help
Bob Cornes

Photo Jonathan Durward



BERNIE WAS BEGINNING TO SUSPECT HE WAS A RESTLESS SLEEPER

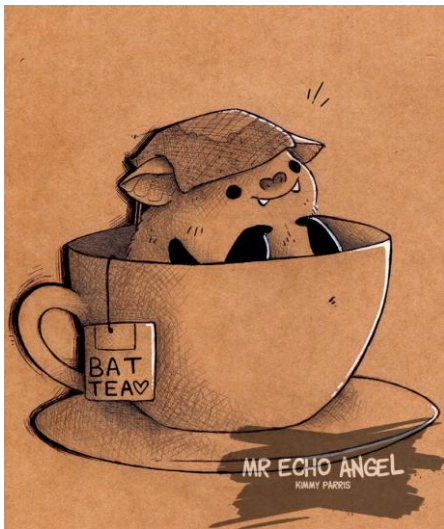


*Daniel Hargreaves

Next time

We have made no reference to the latest Trinibats trip, so we will tell you more next time. This year there were two trips and we went on the second one. The gentleman on the left was caught on the first week and by all accounts was a really gentle bat. This is *Centurio senex*, a bat I have always wanted to see but alas although we went back to the same place he was not available for catching. But we don't mind; just wait until you read about what we did find

Bats and viruses



This illustration has nothing to do the article but what the heck

Researchers from Maryland and New York have identified a novel herpes virus in cells taken from a bat. The work, published this week in *mSphere*, the American Society for Microbiology's new open access journal, could lead to better understanding of the biology of these viruses and why bats serve as hosts for a number of viruses that can potentially transfer to humans.

The investigators set out to study bats' immune response to infection, looking at cells from a tumor taken from the wing of an adult female bat found in a cave in Texas. While using a laboratory technique called next-generation sequencing to study genetic material from the cells, they quickly noticed that a large number of genes expressed weren't bat genes but instead were genes related to herpes viruses.

Through further lab experiments, they isolated and characterized a novel bat gammaherpesvirus, bat gammaherpesvirus 8 (BGHV8). In humans, gammaherpesviruses like Epstein-Barr virus are known for causing diseases like infectious mononucleosis and some cancers. The researchers were able to assemble a genome of nearly 130,000

base pairs of genetic material for the virus, and to show that the virus was capable of multiplying in the lab and of infecting human and animal cell lines.

"The cool thing about this study is that it was so surprising," said senior study author Christopher Basler, PhD, a professor of microbiology at the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai, New York. "We didn't go looking for a virus and really, by accident, we found this new virus, and it turned out to be the first replicating bat gammaherpesvirus. We think it's exciting for people interested in studying how bats interact with viruses."

During the lab studies, investigators took liquid growing on top of the bat cell line and put it onto another line of cells called Vero cells that allow viruses to reproduce. Within 18 hours, the Vero cells were dead, said lead study author Reed Shabman, PhD, an assistant professor and infectious disease investigator at the J. Craig Venter Institute in Rockville, Md. BGHV8 cells also were able to infect isolated human lung and human liver cells. Not only could the researchers see viral particles in the bat cells using an electron microscope, but studying the virus' family tree, they determined that BGHV8 is similar to but distinct from other gammaherpesviruses.

"This is the first replicating bat gammaherpesvirus that's been isolated," Shabman said. "Most labs just have bits and pieces of a virus."

A big question is why bats are repeatedly associated with infections that transfer to humans, Basler said. "We have very few tools to study bats' immune response to viruses. This natural bat virus is actually going to prove to be useful in understanding and probing how bats respond to natural infections and microorganisms that can cause

disease."

Herpes viruses encode many genes that help the viruses evade immune responses and persist, Basler added. Having the genome for BGHV8 will allow the team to probe specific antiviral functions to see how they work in bats and learn how these mechanisms are similar to or different from those of humans.

Story Source:

The above post is reprinted from [materials](https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2016/02/160217140319.htm#.VsbxKT3raa0.facebook) provided by [American Society for Microbiology](https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2016/02/160217140319.htm#.VsbxKT3raa0.facebook). Note: Materials may be edited for content and length.

<https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2016/02/160217140319.htm#.VsbxKT3raa0.facebook>

Martin's blog



Hawk eyed readers may spot that the web address of Martin O'Connor's Bedfordshire Bat group blog is no longer on the front page. This is because we now have a blog on the main website, which we did not have when Martin set up the blog at the time we had a captive Noctule give birth in captivity. (Not to mention the fact that now Martin has set up his own consultancy, there is a certain lack of time) I will continue posting updates on both the Facebook page and the website. Occasionally Bob or I (or indeed other survey leaders) will put a post on the Yahoo newsgroup.

What's On

To keep really up to date with events, follow what we do on our Facebook **Bedfordshire Bat Group**. A list of all this season's regular events is in the website calendar page on the Bedfordshire Bat Group website, which has a month by month breakdown of all regular surveys. Other events such as some box checking and woodland surveys will be organised at shorter notice. These will appear on the newsgroup as dates are confirmed. Maps are on the website and the newsgroup. If you haven't yet joined the newsgroup, e mail Jude and she will send you an invite. Shaded events are not open to non members

04 Apr	Stockgrove	8.00
10 Apr	Kings Wood Box Survey	9.00
14 Apr	Lakeside	19.30
16 Apr	E Regional Bat conference	all day
17 Apr	HOCP box surveys	11.00
18 Apr	Stockgrove	20.10
25 Apr	Sandy	20.30
28 Apr	Lakeside	19.45
02 May	Stockgrove	20.30
04 May	New Luton survey	20.50
08 May	Kings Wood Box Survey	9.00
12 May	Lakeside	20.35
16 May	Stockgrove	20.30
20 May	Priory Bat Walk	21.00
22 May	HOCP box surveys	11.00
26 May	Lakeside	21.00
30 May	Stockgrove	20.50
05 Jun	Kings Wood Box Survey	9.00
06 Jun	Committee meeting	19.30
09 Jun	Lakeside	20.45
13 Jun	Stockgrove	20.00
16 Jun	HOCP	20.20
19 Jun	HOCP box surveys	11.00
22 Jun	New Luton survey	20.55
23 Jun	Lakeside	20.50
26 Jun	Kings Wood Box Survey	9.00
27 Jun	Sandy	21.30
27 Jun	Stockgrove	21.00
07 Jul	Lakeside	20.45
11 Jul	Stockgrove	20.53
14 Jul	HOCP	20.15
17 Jul	Kings Wood Box Survey	9.00



Who you gonna call?

Last minute events		See the newsgroup
Membership/ Sandy survey	Tony Aldhous	tony_bbg@aldhous.me.uk
Newsletter Website, Events Indoor meetings	Jude Hirstwood	30 Park Street, Ampthill, Beds MK45 2LR Tel 01525 403951 jude@judeandbob.bbmax.co.uk Mob:07951 072691
Records	Bob Cornes	records@judeandbob.bbmax.co.uk
Woodland surveys (Mid Beds)	Bob Cornes	30 Park Street, Ampthill, Beds MK45 2LR Tel 01525 403951 bob@judeandbob.bbmax.co.uk Mob 07845 232430
Bat Care	Soggy Sabiniarz	Mob: 07870 747038
Stockgrove	Gwen Hitchcock	Mob
Lakeside Survey Bat Care Co-ordinator	Soggy Sabiniarz	Mob: 07870 747038
The Luton survey	Dick and Geraldine Hogg	01582 414057
Harrold Odell Woodland surveys & Box checks (Bedford)	Kelly Robinson /Nicky Monsey	Kel07903 756477 dragon_fury@yahoo.co.uk Nicky hocp@bedford.gov.uk Tel 01234 720016 (Kel can't use her phone during work hours)
Priory events Bats in Boats River Ouse survey. Roost visitor training admin	Danny Fellman (Chair)	danny@fellman.co.uk

We look forward to seeing you at events this season
6 Jun Kings Wood Box Survey 9.00

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