

# Surprise Parti\*

## Daniel Hargreaves

Surprised bat workers from Essex received a shock this month after finding a Parti-coloured bat, a species not found to be resident in the UK. This rare bat was rescued in December by the South Essex Wildlife Hospital (SEWH) but not identified until a local bat worker came across the bat by chance

The Parti-coloured bat is a known long distance migrant found in Central Europe it has been recorded migrating up to 1,780 km (Markovets *et al.* 2004), a huge distance for an animal weighing less than 20g. It's possible the species could be residing here but we are yet to prove it's nothing more than an occasional migrant. Very little is known about bat migration in the UK and it's hoped this bat might help to give some clues. Fur clippings were taken and have been included as part of a number of projects to determine migration routes/patterns for bats.



Photo Daniel Hargreaves

*\*Editor's Note: Daniel came up with the title for this article. It's not one of mine but oh how I wish it had been. (I'd been toying with "Now is the time for all good men to come to the aid of the parti", which just is not in the same league)*



The bat was found in the middle of London and rescued by the RSPCA who transferred it to SEWH. It's probable that the bat was hibernating in the UK and awoke due to disturbance which can lead to the bat depleting important energy reserves. The bat was passed to Herts & Middx Bat Group for flight practice and later released. An audience of bat workers armed with recording devices looked on as the bat flew away. It's hoped that surveys through the year might lead to finding further UK records and it's great that we now have recordings to use as a reference.

We have recordings made in the flight cage and as the bat was released if you want to hear them.

### A bluffer's guide to the parti coloured bat

- Its name is derived from its fur, which has two colours. Its backside is red to dark-brown, with silver-white-frosted hair.
- It is one of the few bats that still has the name Linnaeus gave it
- Parti coloured females have 2 pairs of nipples.
- They give birth to twins.
- They live for a maximum of twelve years, and usually live only 3-4 years
- Before 1980 there had only been 4 recorded sightings in the UK. But since then about one is found a year.
- Males form colonies of up to 250 in the summer.
- Their echolocation is distinctive – and sound quite bird like)
- Don't tell Cliff Tack but Bob and Jude got a last minute to meet this parti-coloured bat in the Herts flight cage the night before she was released and a very fine bat she was too

Jude Hirstwood