



The Echo



Newsletter of the Warwickshire Bat Group

April 2002

Well here we are again. WBG newsletters are arriving like buses. Nothing for ages then one after the other! This time we have lots of batty events to tell you about, and a few stories from the media you might have missed. And 'cause we're feeling generous, let's start with a nice picture of a Noctule bat I've nicked from Derbyshire bat group's newsletter (for those of you who also got an electronic copy, I know theirs was in colour).



APRIL 12th. TALK-Dr. GARETH JONES

As you should previously have heard, we are very privileged to have Dr. Gareth Jones of Bristol University visiting us on 12th April to give a talk entitled "Out of the Dark & into the Light- a Scientific Approach to Bat Conservation". Don't be frightened of the title, we may all have our brains stretched a little but it promises to be entertaining as well as worthwhile (*if you saw the recent Natural World programme on bats on BBC 2, Gareth was in it, so now's your chance to meet a TV star!*). The meeting will be at the University of Warwick, Westwood site and will start at 19.30 (there is a map at the end of the newsletter). If you'd like to come but are still not sure about directions or need help with transport, please 'phone or e-mail the Echo or John Waller at the numbers/addresses below. As Gareth is coming up from Bristol it would be nice if we could have a really good turnout.



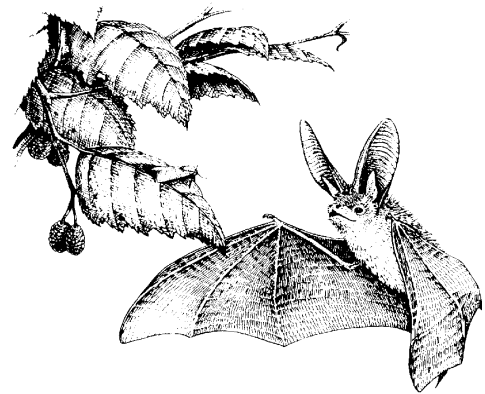
Bat Fact

The New Zealand lesser short-tailed bat (*Mystacina Tuberculata*) is the only bat known to excavate burrows. It uses its incisor teeth, and probably its talon-like claws, to produce burrows which can be as much as 50cm (20in) in depth and up to 10cm (4in) in diameter.



APRIL 22nd. -WBG's AGM

If you've been to an AGM before, you'll know that we try to get through the business and formal stuff with the minimum of people snoring by the end. This year's incentive is a video on these spectacular flying foxes called "Flying Foresters". The AGM this year will also be at Warwick Uni, at 19.30 (as before see Diary for map) and it would be really good to see as many members as possible. We do usually manage to stretch to tea & coffee and a few biscuits at half time. Don't be shy, come and see what you've been paying your subs. towards!



Brown Long-eared Bat.



STOP PRESS – SUN. MARCH 31st.

Dot & I have just returned from checking bat boxes at the National Herb Centre (see article in previous Echo). 12 boxes were installed in their small area of woodland in July 2000 and very shortly after droppings were found in some of the boxes, showing at least occasional use. We have since then, on all but one occasion we have checked, found one male pip. in residence in either the last or last but one box on our route.

Expecting something similar today, or no bats at all as we hadn't checked this early before, I was surprised to find a bat in the very first box. "Looks like a pip," I said as I gathered it in my hand and came down the ladder. "Though it does seem to have rather large feet." As I opened my hand to pass it to Dot, she couldn't help but point out the very large ears unfurling from under its wings! This was a female brown long-eared weighing 6gm. and the next box yielded 2 more, a 5gm male & a 7.5 gm female. As we hadn't found long-eareds before we were quite excited, but the remaining boxes were empty until we reached box 10, which contained a male pip. (looked like a 45) weighing 5gm. Box 11 then had 2 more pips (again probably 45s). One weighed 5gm. & her finger joints were thickened suggesting age, while the other (both females) was only 4.75gm and was probably on of last years young.



Bat Fact

The longest known gestation period for any bat species is 7 to 8 months in the common vampire bat (*Desmodus Rotundus*). The baby then suckles for a further 9 months or more, changing its diet from milk to blood in stages.



EUROPEAN BAT NIGHT-24th. AUG.

Once again European Bat Night falls on the Saturday of the August Bank Holiday weekend. In the past, due to being busy with the Town & Country show, we have never arranged anything in time to go into the BCT's publicity for this. We have arranged the odd last minute bat walk over the years, but here's an idea to put us on the map this year.

Do you have a favourite place where you like to go and watch bats? Would you be willing on this one night to invite any members of the public who want to come and join you? You don't have to be an expert, don't have to even own a bat detector if your bats are obvious to spot. You only really have to stand there and when people join you stick the odd leaflet in their hand (which we would provide) and point going, "Cor, look at that!" the bats will do the rest. If we could get little groups out all over the county on the same night we might be able to generate some serious publicity and some really good PR for bats.

If you think you might be able to join in, or would like to talk about it further, please 'phone or e-mail the Echo. The idea would perhaps be to have one number for people to ring & we would direct them to their nearest event, with the back up of local info. in libraries and post offices. If we want to be included in the BCT's national publicity we need to tell them by 21st. June.

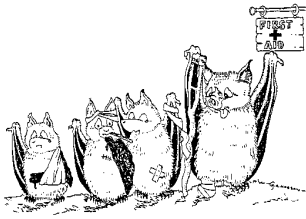
Go on, share the joy!



SE STAFFS BG- DR.DEAN WATERS

A big thank you to Julia Summerton and SESBG for arranging the talk by Dr. Dean Waters on the 12th. March. All of those who attended (there were members of WBG, Staffs BG and B'ham & Black Country BG as well as SESBG) had a brilliant evening and came away thoroughly stimulated and entertained. Dean's talk on his research into the "evolutionary arms race" between bats and moths was so interesting that, for those who missed out, a full scale article is under preparation for the next edition of the Echo.

BAT SURVEY-WARWICKSHIRE
COLLEGE, MORETON MORRELL. WBG
has been approached by Tom Cavanagh of Warks.
College to conduct a bat survey of the college



grounds and its surrounding farmland to help with the writing of a wildlife management plan for the site. It is proposed initially to do a simple survey using

heterodyne bat detectors to record feeding lines, commuting lines and hopefully identify any roost



sites. The area to be covered is quite large, and it would be good to cover it several times over the year to reflect seasonal variations, so as many "bodies" as can volunteer would be

welcome.

The basic method will be to divide the site up into sectors, placing a surveyor with a bat detector in each sector from just before sunset. The "watch" could then be for up to 2hrs. depending on weather etc., and the surveyor would note any sign of bats emerging from structures or trees in their sector, and the numbers of bat "passes" and "feeding buzzes". If species identification is possible, even better, but it's not vital at this stage (that lets Dot & me off the hook!).

If anyone feels they could offer their services to help with this, please contact the Echo by 'phone e-mail or post. If you don't have a bat detector of your own, we may be able to lend you one for the survey. If enough people are interested, we may be able to set up a detector training workshop. It would be helpful if you could state if there are any nights of the week you are never available.

(The college, formerly Warks. Agricultural College, is situated about 5 miles south of Leamington Spa just off the Fosse Way).

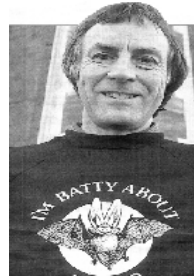


BAT FACT

The shortest known gestation period in bats, by a very small margin, is probably 40-45 days in the common pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus*) which lives in Europe & SW Asia. However, many other temperate species have similarly short gestations.

PHIL RICHARDSON'S NEW JOB.

(Most of you will have heard of Phil, and many of you will have met him. Who could forget his lovely photos of leeches & tics clinging to him on his S.American adventures!)



Bat man embarks on special mission

By Angela Pownall Environment Reporter Northampton's Chronicle & Echo newspaper Wed Feb 6th 2002
The Nation's first "bat man", whose

quest it is to save an entire species, is a former chemistry teacher from Northampton.

Phil Richardson, who used to teach at Duston Upper School, has taken on the massive task of protecting the country's millions of threatened and rare bats.

As the National Trust's first bat conservation officer, 51-year old Mr Richardson will travel around the country rescuing and ensuring the safety of the elusive creatures. Mr Richardson, who lives in Whilton Road, Great Brington, said: "It's great to spend all my life following bats and now to get paid for it. What I do will have significant effect on the bat population. There is so much new information we can find out about these complex creatures."

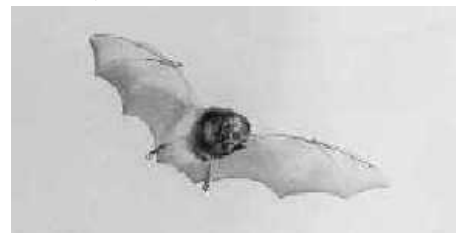
Mr Richardson, who has been interested in bat conservation for years, will take care of millions of bats living in the 25,000 National Trust buildings and woodlands. Although there are thought to be millions of bats all over the country, 10 of the 16 species found in the UK are considered to be scarce with numbers down to the last 1,000. Mr Richardson will look after bat roosts, which are often in old stone buildings, and work to find out more about the bat's secret nocturnal world. He will also advise how repairs can be carried out to the Trust's old buildings without damaging the roosts and keep records to monitor the progress of endangered species.

Outside the classroom, Mr Richardson worked with bats for 25 years and set up Northamptonshire's branch of the Bat Conservation Trust. *[I think they mean Northants bat group]*

The county itself is a haven for populations of rare bats, and endangered Horseshoe bats can be found in the National Trust's building at Canons Ashby.

As daunting as his task to save the UK's bat population may seem Mr Richardson has enjoyed the first few weeks of his new job.

"I have really enjoyed it so far. Bat conservation is certainly less stressful than teaching a classroom full of children," he said.



WARWICKSHIRE BAT HOSPITAL- OPEN EVENING.

Susie Duke at the Bat Hospital is planning to have an open evening for WBG members to meet some of the resident bats, hopefully see some of them out in the outdoor flight cage, and maybe have a bit of a barbecue. At the time of going to press the date has just been finalised, as Saturday August 17th. Details will be posted on the WBG website. If you don't have access to the web, you could 'phone nearer the date to either of the WBG nos. or ring Susie on 01564 782612.

DO BATS HAVE PERFECT PITCH?

Acoustical Society of America

ASA/EAA/DAGA Meeting Press Release

Certain animals, such as bats and dolphins, perceive their environment through natural sonar systems, in which they broadcast sound at objects and listen to their echoes to obtain detailed representations of them. New experiments suggest that bats may have something that most human musicians envy: perfect pitch, the ability to recognise the pitch of a particular echo tone in isolation rather than in relation to other tones, which is what most human musicians have to do when they hear musical notes. Sabine Schmidt of the University of Munich will describe how this ability may allow bats to build an "acoustical library" for identifying objects. Determining how bats use their sonar to recognise the textures of different surfaces in their environment, Rolf Mueller (*no relation as far as we know*) and Roman Kuc of Yale University have incorporated these properties into an artificial system that can distinguish between different types of trees. And if you've ever wondered what it's like to be one of these creatures, the researchers will play audible versions of the sounds that a bat hears when it operates its sonar. Mueller and Kuc use the term "acoustic ecology" to describe their work on characterising the bat's sonic environment.

This press release relates to a conference the ASA held in Berlin in March 1999. There is information on a 'lay' paper, "Biosonar in a Textured World by Rolf Müller and Roman Kuc": <http://www.acoustics.org/press/137th/mueller.html>

It still seems quite technical, but it gives you an idea of how they are trying to study the bat's sonar.

Juli@

IS IT A BIRD? IS IT A PLANE? - NO, IT'S A "BAT-SAIL"!



A lecturer at the University of Plymouth has designed a new type of sail that could be used on various vessels from windsurfing boards to wind-assisted tankers. As an anatomy and physiology teacher the sail, known as the "transition rig", is heavily influenced by the shape of a bat wing, consisting of a jointed and segmented structure that can be folded neatly up when not in use.

Dr Richard Dyden is a keen windsurfer and "wanted a rig that would adapt better to changing wind strengths. After looking around at what was available, I decided to develop a rig that changes shape a bit like a bat or a bird's wing. The joints I use are quite biological to look at and the actual arrangement of the mast is rather similar to a limb."

The mast is in 3 adjustable segments and tensioned to hold it in place. In light winds the mast can be fully extended and in stronger winds its joints flex with the upper segment becoming swept back. This brings the focus of the forces on the sail (known as the centre of effort) lower down and stops the vessel using it from being overpowered. However, because the mast changes shape, the sailcloth needs to stretch with it and so Dr Dyden is still researching the best material to use. He was using a nylon cloth that has been coated on one side with a polyurethane but the latest news from the website (www.transitionrig.com) is that in December 2001 he built a new dinghy sail from transparent stretch film, which he had already tested on a windsurfing board in September. You can check out his progress and learn all about rigs at www.transitionrig.com

NIGHT VISION BINOCULARS.

The following is from John Waller:

"Hi, I have received this email from Solymann@aol.com advertising night vision binoculars. These seem to be a reasonable price, but it's still a lot of dosh. I don't want to seem to be endorsing this product or supplier, since I have no idea about either, but I thought it was worth passing on:

'Dear sirs, I have for sale some Night Vision binoculars.

Type: Newcon BN-5.1st generation. With Infra red light.

These are wonderful for watching bats/animals at night.

Current retail price in U.K . £456.00 +pp

My price. £300.00 +pp !

These are brand new and the best of their class.

If you are interested please return with e-mail.

I have a limited number at present, but I am currently trying to source them in Moscow.

Many thanks for your time,

Best regards, Gary."



HABITAT REGULATION LICENCES-GUIDANCE TO BAT GROUPS.

If anyone would like a copy of the above document from the BCT, Dot has several spare. Contact her

at the Echo and she'll post one out to you.



DIARY APRIL

April 12th. 19.30 Univ. of Warwick

Westwood site (see map)- " Out of the Dark & into the Light- A Scientific approach to Bat Conservation". Talk by Dr. Gareth Jones of Bristol University.

April 21st. Coombe Abbey Country Park- A Twilight Amble. Contact the rangers' office for further details.

April 22nd. WBG AGM 19.30 Univ. of Warwick Westwood site (see map)- AGM plus a video on Old World fruit bats "Flying Foresters".

April 27th. National Beekeepers Convention, Royal Show Ground, NAC, Stonleigh- there will be an info stand on behalf of the BCT.

MAY

May 5th. Dawn till Dusk Day at Brandon Marsh- contact WWT for further details.

May 18th. Bat Walk in Bedworth 21.00- organised by North Warks. Council & WBG. Contact John Waller or Maggie King at the Council for more info..

May 19th. Burbage Common Open Day, Nr. Hinckley- we will be having our usual display & info stall together with wildlife organisations from Warks. & Leics.

May 23rd. Bat Walk at Tocil Wood, Univ. of Warwick 20.30- meet at Rootes Residences car park. Organised by WWT & WBG.

May 26th. Batty about Bats! Coombe Country Park 20.30- advance booking required, tel: 024 7645 3720. Cost £1 adults 75p children.

JUNE

June 1st. Bat Walk Charlote Park 21.00- organised by the National Trust. Booking required. Tel: 01789 470227 Cost £2.50.

June 9th. Shustoke Reservoir Wildlife open day- WBG display stand & info. stall.

June 16th. HDRA Ryton Gardens Jubilee Day- WBG display & info. stall.

June 21st. Bats & Moths, Ryton Pools Country Park, 21.30- booking essential 01827 872660. Cost adults £1.50 concessions £1 family £3.50.

June 28th. Nocturnal Magic, Draycote Water Country Park, 21.30- organised by WCC & Severn Trent Water. Booking essential. No. & prices as Ryton Pools.

JULY

July 12th. Bats & Moths II, Ryton Pools, 21.30- booking details & costs as above.

AUGUST

August 14th. Bat Night, Kingsbury Water Park, 19.30- organised by WCC & Warks. Mammal Group. Talk, food & walk. Booking essential 01827 872660. Cost adults £3.80, concessions £3.30 (includes food)

August 17th. Warwickshire Bat Hospital Open Evening- see article above for more info..

August 24th. European Bat Night- see article above.

SEPTEMBER

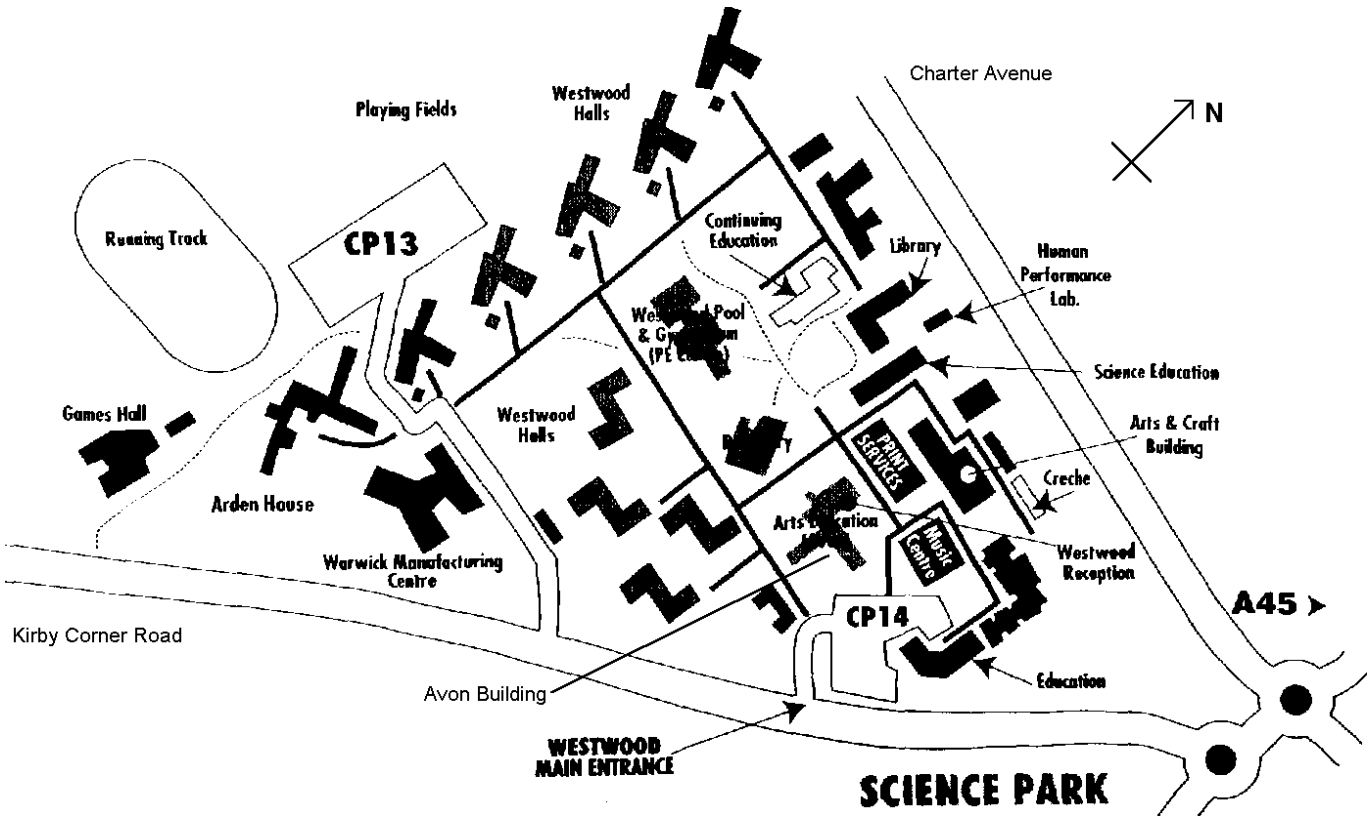
September 14th. Bat Walk, Charlote Park, 19.30- organised by the National Trust. Booking required 01789 470227. Cost £2.50.

First Monday of month (except Bank Holidays, when it's the next Mon.) we still have our informal meetings at the Virgins & Castle, High St., Kenilworth.

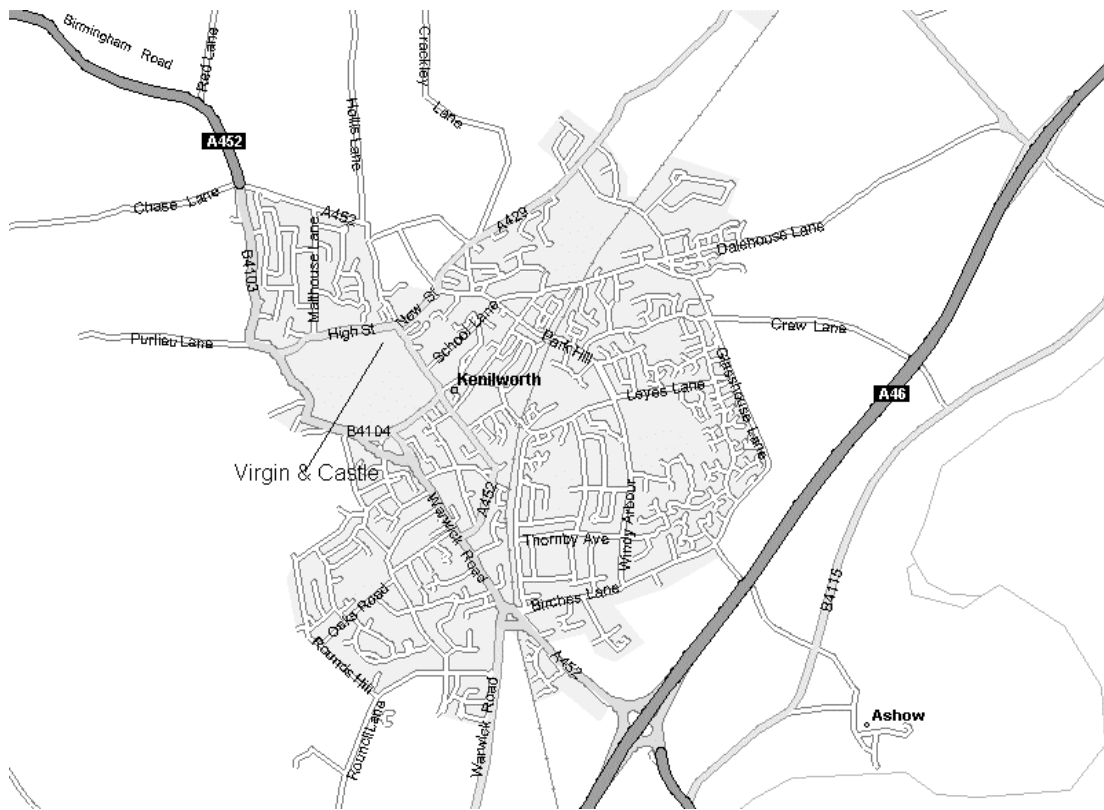
All the above details are correct at the time of going to press, but please check the WBG website if possible for further info.. If in doubt about the details of any events, or if you need directions, 'phone the contact no. on the front of the newsletter. And if you know of any more batty events, please let us know.



MAP OF WESTWOOD SITE



The University of Warwick is well sign posted from the A45 in Coventry. Make your way to the main entrance-car park 14 where there will be signs and/or someone to direct you.



This is where we hold our monthly informal meetings.