



The Echo



Newsletter of the Warwickshire Bat Group

AUGUST 2000

AGM

The AGM was, as usual, a very informal occasion. John Waller informed us of the Bat Group's financial state, which is good, and, as Julia Waller was taking the minutes of the meeting, he also covered the membership report. In the last year we have lost 4 members but gained 12, which takes us up to 54 Memberships, many of which are Family Memberships. The Bat Group had £1,884 in the bank, as of the end of 1999, £663 of which was a grant from English Nature towards new Bat Box III detectors. The group has also bought two sets of surveyors ladders, some Batworkers' Manuals and other books, as well as having new membership leaflets printed. Some of the remaining capital is 'earmarked' for new display stands, as the ones currently in use are not actually ours.

John also reported back with the findings from the questionnaire. Of those who replied (approximately 70% of the membership) 70% were interested in taking part in batwalks, 60% interested in surveys, and 50% owned a bat detector: while almost 40% expressed an interest in survey training and 26% would like to train for E.N. licences.

Chairman Paul Elliott handed out information sheets that listed all the things the group had tackled/dealt with in the last year, and as you can see from the list below we were fairly busy! We attended various public events, ran several batwalks, including the informal walks for Bat Group members, which were a bit of a trial run, took the display to specialist events and gave talks and slide shows to interested groups.

EVENTS 1999

14.5.99	NT Batwalk, Upton House
15.5.99	Coalpit Fields, Bedworth
16.5.99	Burbage Common Open Day and walk
29.5.99	Bat walk at Memorial Park
5/6.6.99	Godiva weekend, Memorial Park
16.6.98	Batwalk, Tocil Wood LNR
19.6.99	Batwalk, Stratford
22.6.99	BCT Bat detector workshop
17/18.7.99	Global Festival, Milton Keynes
23.7.99	Batwalk, Long Lawford
31.7.99	Going Green In The Park, Rugby
31.7.99	Batwalk, Memorial Park

16.8.99	Batwalk, Canley Ford
28/29/30.8.99	Town And Country Festival, Stoneleigh
14.9.99	Batwalk, Hatton Locks
5.10.99	Warwickshire Biodiversity Conference
3.11.99	PestTec '99, National Motorcycle Museum
13.11.99	Stratford Youth Conference

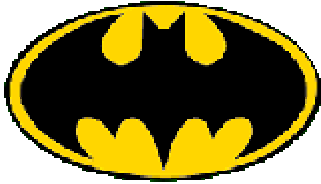
The Winter Programme provided the WBG with a chance to hear about Leicestershire Bat Group's work, threatened bats in the Comores and Vampire Bats, as well as the work of the Biodiversity Audit. The last talk of the programme was from Geoff Lewis, a founder member of the Bat Group, who is still walking around in the dark, but now watching badgers.

Members of the batgroup have also taken part in the National Bat Monitoring Programme surveys; undertaken a Summer survey at Baddesley Clinton and Winter surveys at Farnborough Hall, Charlecote Park and Packwood House for the National Trust; attended regional bat meetings with English Nature; continued representation on Coventry Biodiversity Working Group and licensed members made roost visits on behalf of English Nature.

In March a meeting was held with the new County Biological Recorder and colleagues from Warwickshire Planning Department to discuss how to improve recording procedures for the county, and a new bat recording form is to be designed and produced.

THE WELSH BAT CONFERENCE

This event, (12th - 14th May), was held at Plas Tan Y Bwlch in North Wales. As well as hearing about ongoing work by Welsh Batgroups there were also talks on bat detectors; using sonograms; bat swarming behaviour; the Interreg bat holiday project; Bat Atlas 2000 and the North Atlantic effect on Horseshoe bats. On the Saturday evening there was a mass batroost exit count as Chris Hall had enough manpower to 'stake out' all the known roosts in the village and its environs. As it is known that bats tend to 'shuffle' between roosts, counting them all on the same night gave him a more realistic idea of the numbers of bats in the area. The total number of bats was 1606, 948 being Horseshoe bats. What surprised him most was that many sites known only as Autumn roosts had quite sizeable exit counts.



THE BATMAN INTERVIEW

Phil Richardson – Chairman Northamptonshire Bat Group, Chairman Bat Conservation Trust.

How long have you been interested in bats?
25 years.

How long have you been involved in batwork? and...
20+ years.

How did you get involved in the first place?
Birding got too hectic. Diversified into mammals.

What has been your most embarrassing bat moment?
Police were called when we were working at a church, smashing a window of roost with a net pole.

What was your most hilarious bat moment?
Mealworms (taken there to feed a captive bat as PR) escaping in a roost owners home and disappearing into the thick pile carpet. He was furious.

And the saddest?
Long term captive bat dying.

Where is the most exotic place you have been, to do batwork? and....
Solomon Islands

Where was the most uncomfortable place? (Could be the same...)
Caves in Thailand.

What has been your most dangerous bat related experience?
Huge cave complexes – getting lost.

Desert Island Bats

Which 8 bat species would you choose to be stranded on a desert island with? And why? (be brief)

Honduran white ghost bat - pretty nice
Ghost bat – stunning
Solomon Island tube-nosed fruit bat – interesting
Daubenton's – great
Egyptian fruit bat – pretty
Barbastelle – ugly but nice
Frog-eating bat – spectacular
Kitti's hog-nosed bat – rarest

And if you could choose only one of the eight?
Solomon Island tube-nosed fruit bat

You already have 'Bats Of The World' and a good bat-biology textbook, which other essential bat book would you take?

'Bats' by Phil Richardson

And your bat related luxury?...

'Bats' by Phil Richardson.

And Finally

How many batty T-shirts have you got?
16

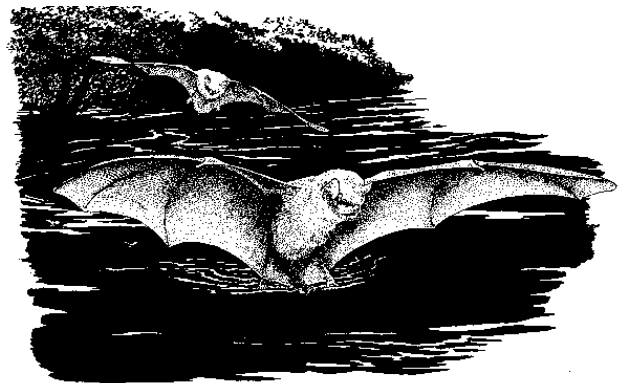
And soft bat toys?
200 (but I do sell soft-toy bats!)

Lastly

If cash and time were no object, what would be your ultimate bat dream?

Full-time work on Daubenton's bats.

Please note the blatant plug for the book 'Bats' by Phil Richardson, and the soft-toy bats available through the Batatalogue which Phil runs from his home – 10 Bedford Cottages, Great Brington, Northamptonshire, NN7 4JE. – Ed.



INTERREG PROJECT

The main objective of this project is to provide long-term protection of bat roosts by promoting the positive aspects of having bats in your property. The main aim of the pilot study is to determine what interest holiday property owners have in their bat roosts, in terms of learning more about their bats, preventing/sorting out any problems with their roosts, passing on information about their bats to their guests and actively promoting bat watching for their guests.

The project is funded by Interreg which is a European Union grant set up to 'improve cross border communications' between Eastern Ireland and Western Wales, and a similar project is running in Ireland.

Two hotels in Gwynedd are already actively promoting their bats,

Cobdens Hotel in Capel Curig has one of the largest known pipistrelle roosts in the UK, with over 1000 bats emerging each night. The hotel has its own website that promotes bat watching.

Penmaen Uchaf Hall Hotel, just outside Dolgellau has been advertising their bats for several years. They have several bat species, including Lesser Horseshoes, which can be viewed emerging from their roost while watchers sit comfortably inside.

As the project is only funded part-time, a lot of voluntary hours have gone into it but so far they have produced an Information Pack for holiday property roost owners which includes useful leaflets (species, basic bat info, bat detector info, etc.) both for the owners and their guests.

In the future there will also be a database of holiday properties with roost and bat species information, and the project is already providing training for roost owners and tourist guides with 'taking the public on batwalks' workshops.

If this pilot is successful the project will hopefully attract further funding and be able to continue.

REVIEW REQUEST

Have you read an extremely good bat-book recently, or discovered a fantastic tape or CD of bat sounds?

Conversely have you paid out a fair amount of hard earned cash for something that turned out to be a bit of a turkey?

Either way Julia (Waller) would like to hear from you for the review section on the new web-site. It doesn't matter how short your review is she'd like to receive it, as she's hard at work right now updating, improving and totally overhauling the web-site. Post your reviews to Julia Waller, 12 Badger Road, Binley, Coventry, CV3 2PU or, if you prefer, send by e-mail to the batgroup's e-mail address below.

batgroup@jwaller.demon.co.uk

£40,000 HOME FOR SALE – BATS ONLY NEED APPLY

– From The Daily Telegraph

A development of 33 luxury homes being built on the outskirts of Gloucester seems certain to be in demand. However, prospective buyers of the £350,000 houses, which command fine views of the city's cathedral, may be concerned about the behaviour of the 50 or so inhabitants of the first home to be completed. They go out every night and sleep all day.

The bungalow has been purpose built to house a colony of Lesser Horseshoe bats that lived in the boiler house of a hospital that used to stand on the site at Over. The hospital was closed in 1993 and earmarked for new building, but prospective developers were told their plans would have to incorporate the protected species.

The result was the £40,000 bungalow, 36ft by 24ft, with a cold basement for hibernation and a roof space that will provide a breeding area.

Claude Elliott of Gloucester Bat Group said, "They will make great neighbours."



A BAT IN THE HAND....

WBG received this letter from bat group member B. Beacham

Dear WBG – Finally I have got round to sending you my membership and form, which I have been intending to do for a very long time.

My specific interest in bats was sparked off, when I found a cat mauled pipistrelle running about, very actively, where I work. I work outside mostly, and my work is with birds of prey. I had never seen anything so amazing in my life, and felt honoured to see a bat at such close quarters. I took her home, and wanted to find out as much as I could about bats, so started getting very involved in researching them. I did actually 'phone, and speak to, Paul Elliott and several other bat experts around the country.

Well, to cut along story short, I kept her, she had regular visits to our excellent avian vet, for check ups, and once for a course of anti-biotics. She became a huge part of my life, as I tended her and nursed her back to health (except for a badly damaged wing which meant she was never going to fly again). I looked after her for 6 months and then she died. A nasty infection had suddenly developed on the wing membrane, and it was just "the straw that broke the camel's back". Not only was I upset she was gone, she had got me hooked, to learn more and if at all possible, look after other injured bats, needing a good carer.

This is the reason, and how, I became drawn to join WBG because I am now fascinated by bats, from finding and caring for her, and from what I've read for myself.

I feel I have learnt a bit in those 6 months, and hope I can put it to use – one day.

MISCELLANEOUS

Warwickshire Bat Group now has Zippy Bats and Zappy bats (supplied by a company called JellyCat Ltd) for sale. These small soft toy bats (not suitable for under 36 months) zip together to make a 'string', but only if you buy several!

Zippy bats are plain fruit bats and Zappy bats have snazzy lined wings, and fangs! Price £3.95 plus P&P. Contact Dot, 24 main Street, Long Lawford, Rugby, tel: 01788 550139. They will also be available on our stall at the Town And Country Festival.

As Julia is concentrating on the web-site could any queries relating to membership (applications, renewals, changes etc.) be addressed to John Waller, as he has taken this on for the foreseeable future.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

4TH August (Fri) – Batwalk along Coventry Canal, start at Swan Lane [SP347804] - 8.30pm. Organised by Foleshill Canals Alive Rangers and lead by Bat Group member John Waller.

5th August (Sat) – Batwalk at Coombe Country Park, Coombe Abbey [SP400795] – 8pm. £1 adults, 50p children. Organised by Coombe Park, booking is essential on 024 7645 3720.

11th August (Fri) – Batwalk at Brandon Marsh Nature Centre [SP380763] – 8.30pm. Organised by WWT, assisted by the bat group. Booking essential on 024 7630 8977.

19th August (Sat) – Rugby Advertiser Carnival, Whitehall recreation Ground. The batgroup will have a stall at this event.

26th August (Sat) – European Bat Night. Batwalk Tocil Wood, Warwick University, 8pm.

26th, 27th, 28th August (Sat, Sun, Mon) – The Town And Country Festival – Bank holiday weekend – Royal Show Ground, Stoneleigh NAC. The batgroup, representing the BCT in the Welcome To The Countryside feature will have a stall at this event.

16th September (Sat) – Batgroup walk at Stockton Locks – 7pm. Meet in the car park at the Blue Lias pub [427646] (between Southam and Long Itchington) which is on a minor road between the A423 and the A426. Look out for distinctive dinosaur pub sign and the entrance to the car park is between the humpback bridges for the canal and derelict railway. Lead by batgroup member Sean Neill.

FINALLY

What have you been doing since the last newsletter? Why don't you put pen to paper and tell us all about it, whether its anomalies in your NBMP counting; strange, interesting or downright stupid happenings while you've been involved in something bat related; happy or sad experiences. Whatever you've been up to, other members of WBG would like to hear about it and the newsletter is the easiest way to reach everybody.

Please send your articles, complaints, jokes or anything you've spotted from somewhere else for that matter, to the following address;

24 Main Street, Long Lawford, Rugby, CV23 9AZ.

E-mail – dotrob.batmad@virginnet.co.uk

Tel – 01788 550139