



# The Echo



Newsletter of the Warwickshire Bat Group

December 2002

*Since the November issue of the Echo you will all be aware that the subject of rabies is one we now have to sadly re-assess. I'm sure we would all wish to express our condolences to David McRae's family.*

*For those of you whose only source of information has been the mainstream media, below is the BCT's press release after David's death was announced. The only thing we can say about the newspaper reporting is that it could be a lot worse (a notable exception being the Daily Express which I hope no self-respecting bat worker will ever take again!).*



## CONSERVATIONISTS GRIEVE FOR DEDICATED BAT WORKER

The Bat Conservation Trust (BCT) was deeply saddened to hear of the death, on 24<sup>th</sup> November, of bat worker David McRae. On behalf of all bat workers, BCT extends its heartfelt sympathy to David's family and all those who knew him.

John Haddow, both a close friend of David's and a bat worker, said last night: "David McRae was a naturalist and artist, and had a fascination with all wildlife, particularly mammals, since childhood. He was a dedicated voluntary bat conservation worker, and was a cornerstone in developing the network of bat workers in Scotland."

He continued: "David was an amiable, kindly and solidly reliable person, often entertaining his many friends with his sense of humour and acutely observed stories. He brought his artist's eye into his bat work and was able to make fresh observations as a result. He will be sadly missed by everyone who knew him in the bat worker community."

The Bat Conservation Trust (BCT) continues to emphasise that there is no risk to the public so long as they do not handle bats. In the rare situations where the general public may come across a grounded bat,

they should contact the BCT's UK Helpline (0845 1300 228) to be put in touch with a trained, vaccinated bat worker. Although only a tiny proportion of bats are believed to carry rabies,

anyone bitten by a bat should seek immediate medical advice. Reliable, post-exposure treatment is readily available for anyone who may have been exposed to rabies.

The Bat Conservation Trust continues to advise bat workers to ensure that they are vaccinated against rabies. The volunteer bat worker network is invaluable to bat conservation, and the health and safety of these volunteers is of paramount importance. Over 1,000 volunteers, from 95 bat groups across the UK, devote their spare time to providing information and advice to the public about bats and to dispel the many myths and misconceptions people have about bats.

As a longer-term solution, BCT is actively working with the Department of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) and government agencies across the UK to continue surveying for European Bat Lyssavirus (EBL). Until now, there have only been two cases of bats carrying EBL confirmed in the UK out of 3,000 bats tested.

*The BCT also provided for editors the following full quote from John Haddow:*

"David McRae described himself as a naturalist and artist, neither one more than the other. In recent years he was able to put down his paintbrush and at short notice drive miles across country to advise on bats. He has had a fascination with all forms of wildlife – particularly mammals, reptiles and amphibians – since childhood.

"After working in the museum in Oldham for many years, he moved to Angus in the 1980s to start a fresh life as an artist. Although this provided his bread and butter, he continued to develop his knowledge of mammals, bats in particular. He soon became "Batman" in the county of Angus, and was the cornerstone of the Angus bat group.

"David was a valued expert, assisting SNH in giving advice, acting as a bat worker trainer and passing on knowledge and skills to others; he was also a recognised environmental consultant, for example where planning developments may

affect bats. David took an active part in developing the network of bat workers in Scotland, and was a keen participant in the UK's National Bat Monitoring Programme since its early days.

“An amiable, kindly and solidly reliable person, he had many friends whom he often entertained with his sense of humour and acutely observed stories. He brought his artist's eye into his bat work and was able to make fresh observations as a result. He will be sadly missed by everyone who knew him in the bat worker community.”

*This is obviously going to be a very difficult period for bat conservation, and from a legal/ licencing standpoint we will all be waiting to see what further guidance comes from EN & DEFRA.*

*In the present situation there have been some bat workers being approached, sometimes quite intrusively, by the media and as usual finding themselves grossly misquoted. If you're known for your interest in bats and are likely to be approached, be very careful. If you want to see all the press releases from the BCT etc. then please contact the Echo and we'll pass on what we've got.*



## CHRISTMAS PARTY.

Perhaps what we all need at this time, a good old WBG get together.

This year's Christmas Bash is on 18<sup>th</sup>.December at 7.30pm. The venue is St. James' Church Hall, Old Milverton, Leamington Spa.

Please bring some party food and/or drink to share. Our chairman, Paul Elliott, has promised to organise “batty” entertainment (those of you who have experience of Paul's quizzes etc. in the past know you're in for a lot of laughs!).

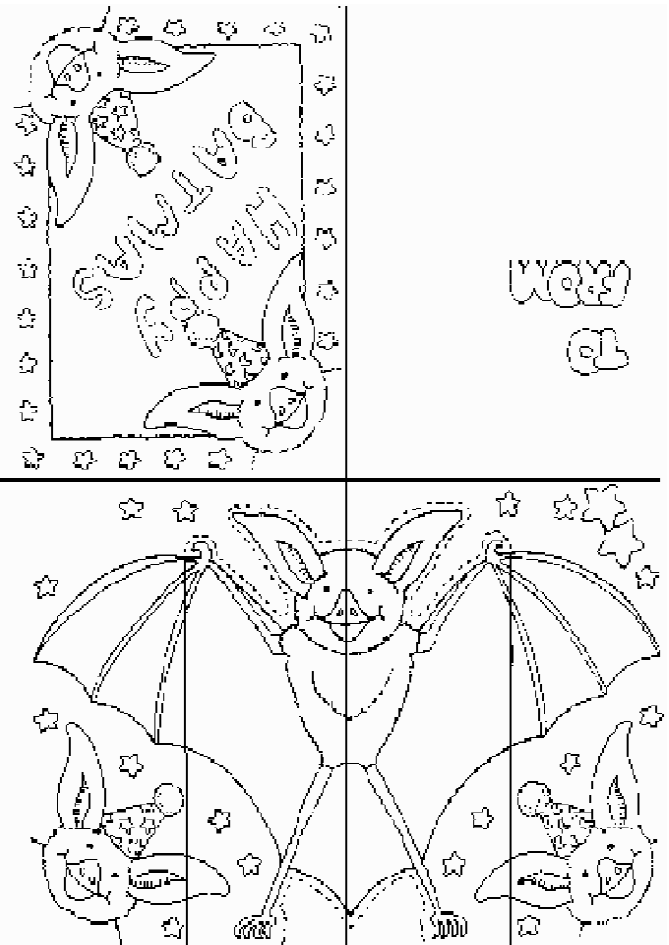
We have used this venue in the past, but we've included a map and directions on a separate sheet.

***Your fed up with trying to think what to buy for presents. Sick of wrestling with the tree, tripping over the decorations. Can't remember where you put the jars of mincemeat & anyway you dropped the pastry on the floor. No one will give you a straight answer about when they're visiting.***

**THEN COME & BE BATTY ON THE 18<sup>th</sup> !**



H



*Here's an idea for a batty Xmas card to copy or to give you ideas.*

*Merry Christmas & a Happy New Year.*