



The Echo



Newsletter of the Warwickshire Bat Group

February 2001

NEWSLETTER

Just a short Newsletter this time as Batgroup members, like bats, appear to hibernate for most of the Winter. Well, if you have been doing something you haven't let The Echo know and without your input there's nothing to print!!

CHRISTMAS PARTY

Those of you that couldn't make it missed a goodie. John Waller gave an amusing and interesting talk on how he is now keeping bat records for the County. It was illustrated with computer graphics and examples on species locations. Apparently what we need now is someone who knows about statistics, bats, reasons for record keeping and what and how to get the best from all the data. In the fullness of time there will be a report form so that we can all send John our 'sightings', but until then if you could personally record the following,

- 1 when and where you saw a bat (dead or alive!), including a 6 figure map reference, please,
- 2 what species it was and how you identified it
- 3 number of bats seen at any one time (and not just bat roosts, but fly-bys etc.)

then when the form is available we won't have lost all this valuable data.

NEWS ABOUT THE AGM

This year's AGM is a little earlier than usual, and, as our usual venue isn't available, we will be meeting in St. James' Church Hall, Old Milverton, Leamington Spa, on Thursday 29th March 2001, at 7.30 pm. (See the enclosed Agenda, Directions and Map.) An AGM isn't as boring as you think, and it could be your chance to have your say, as well as put faces to some of the names you read about in the Newsletter.

BATMAN AND ROSIE

Did any of you hear this on Radio 4? It went out on weekday afternoons, for one week, in the quarter to four slot, or thereabouts, so probably most of us missed it! But, for one night only, Henry Schofield will be telling us all about his study of Bechstein's Bats. This talk will take place at the University of Warwick, but NOT in the usual room. Use the usual car park but the venue is Room WS002, Science Education

Building, on the Westwood Campus.

REGIONAL MEETING REPORT

The final version of the BatAtlas 2000 has been produced and copies are to be sent (sometime in the future) to designated Bat Group contacts rather than County Bat Recorders. And talking of bat records - the feedback of people using the new bat recording software Recorder 2000 has not been too complimentary. I (John W.) had asked if I (or any other computer literate non-biologists) could receive some introductory training in taxonomy as I am the Bat Records Officer for Warks and was having trouble understanding the terms in the software. Phil Burkinshaw (Chair) said he was unable to secure any from the Bat Groups Forum as all the professional biologists at the meeting could not understand why a "non-taxonomist should want to be a species recorder". Next time these people need a friendly programmer/database expert to sort out their GUI I think we'll express surprise that non computer people would wish to use software!!!

The Batalogue (Bat Groups of Great Britain sales catalogue of batty products) is to find a new home with Alana Ecology who will donate a percentage of the profit to BCT.

From April 1st 2001, Joan Childs from the RSPB is to be seconded to the BCT for 2 years as a full time Bat Investigations Officer. The post is likely to be funded by English Nature.

The European Court has ruled that the Public Enquiry System in the UK is seriously compromised since the final arbiter, the Minister for the Environment, is a political appointee and is therefore not impartial. DETR are trying to work out the ramifications of this.

A feasibility study for the setting up of a national bat telephone helpline has been completed by English Nature, who are now soliciting tenders for the contract from interested parties. BCT have put in a bid.

The NBMP depends on funding from the JNCC and to obtain this the BCT needed to produce a report on the NBMP's findings. The principle result seems to be that there was a small, but statistically significant, year-on-year increase in the Lesser Horseshoe population on the British mainland (4.8% per annum for the past 7 years). Paul Racey has conjectured that the population has increased most in Wales due to the efforts of CCW to protect sites and low-intensity farming practises. The statistical significance of the trends in the

Lesser Horseshoe data rather than any other species was due to the large volume of pre-NBMP records collected and contributed by the Vincent Wildlife Trust.

Julie Agate, NBMP Officer, has analysed the bat records returned by children taking part in last Summer's BBC Wild Survey. The results should be sent to the relevant local Bat Groups.

Anecdotal evidence from the regional roundups suggests that record numbers of Natterers have been encountered during December and January hibernaculae counts, possibly due to the extended period of cold weather.

The Mouse-eared bat (*Myotis myotis*) found near Bognor Regis was collected by Sheila Wright. The national press were not told of the discovery until the bat, which had bitten Sheila, had been screened for rabies. It tested negative for rabies/lyssavirus. It is not clear whether the bat, which was found near the last known roost for the species, had been a survivor from that nearby colony.

Another Big Brown bat (*Eptesicus fuscus*) has been found at the same timber yard where the previous mainland record originated. This might have something to do with the fact that they have a bat worker on the staff! The bat is now in quarantine with Herts & Middlesex batgroup.

Two people have been put forward as possible speakers for batgroup events: Katie Parsons who is researching swarming behaviour and Kate Barlow who is looking into ways of distinguishing Common and Soprano Pipistrelles.

It has been suggested by Tony Vetta that any pill-box conversion should include a gap at the base of the door with a small pile of rubble inside. This has successfully attracted hibernating Great-Crested Newts to 2 sites in the south of England.

The National Bat Conference 2001 is confirmed to be at Nottingham University from 31st August to 2nd September.

The next Regional Meeting is scheduled for 2nd June 2001 at Attingham Park English Nature Offices.

John Waller

SOMETHING SPECIAL

On a recent hibernacula survey for the National Trust by the Batgroup, chairman Paul Elliott discovered a Barbastelle bat. This is the first Barbastelle recorded in Warwickshire since the 'Marks and Spencers Bat', several years ago now, and when he first spotted it Paul thought it looked like a Barbastelle but was probably a Long-eared. But something hadn't seemed quite right and so he went back for another look, and his first thought had been correct all along. Only the fifth Barbastelle record for Warwickshire! Several other hibernating bats (*Myotis*) were also found at the same site, as well as signs of Summer use in some of the other buildings.

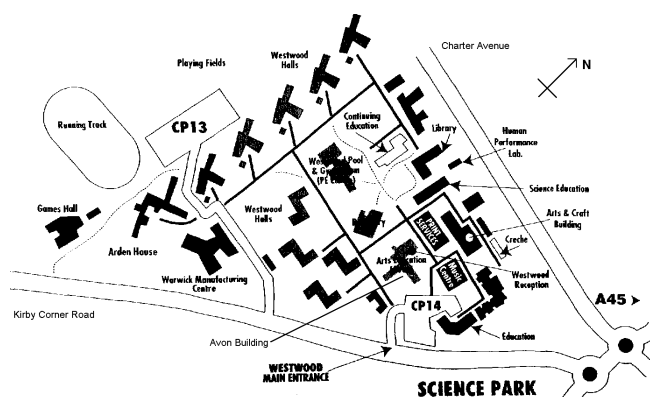
CONTRIBUTIONS FOR THE NEXT NEWSLETTER.

Send your articles, questions etc. by post to - Rob Hunter, 24 Main Street, Long Lawford, Rugby, Warwicks. CV23 9AZ, or by e-mail to - dotrob.batmad@virginnet.co.uk or you could phone 01788 550139!

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

5th March (Mon) – Social meeting in the Virgins and Castle public house, High Street, Kenilworth, 8pm. (Carpark in Bridge St.)

14th March (Thurs) – Henry Schofield - 'Bechstein's Bats' – Room WS002, Science Education Building, Westwood Campus, University of Warwick.



MAP OF WESTWOOD CAMPUS

29th March (Thurs) – AGM. - St James' Church Hall, Old Milverton, Leamington Spa, 7.30 pm. (See attached sheets for larger map.)