



# The Echo



Newsletter of the Warwickshire Bat Group

FEB. 2002

*Well, finally here it is, and all I can say is "Mea culpa" Not entirely "maxima culpa" as there are a few excuses involving other people, but at last there is a newsletter to tell you a little of what's been happening in WBG & the wider world of bats. There are also a couple of very interesting dates for your diary, but most of this years excitement will follow in another frantic burst of activity soon!*



## **Bat Fact**

The guano produced by a huge colony of Mexican free-tailed bats in New Mexico, USA, was used as a major source of nitrates for manufacturing gunpowder during the American Civil War.



## **WHAT DID WE DO IN 2001?**

As mentioned in the report of last years AGM, field work was badly affected by the Foot & Mouth outbreak, and this continued to cast its shadow over the NBMP and any ideas we might have had for serious research projects. However, WBG still continued to lead many public bat walks, organised by ourselves & other organisations. Praise is due to all that braved the torrential downpour to get to Kenilworth Common. The rain stopped just in time for emergence, and we were rewarded with some spectacular flying displays, and glow-worms too!

But the award for devotion beyond the call of duty to those who came along to drown in Victoria Park, Leamington. One of the wettest bat walks on record, but at least we tried.

WBG was represented as usual at a variety of events & shows including Burbage Common Open Day, the Godiva Festival Coventry, Spon End Wakes,

Going Green in Rugby, and the Town & Country Festival. As well as the chance to do a lot of positive PR for bats, we are able to gather lots of useful information at these events and make valuable contacts.

The group was well represented at this years National Bat Conference (see report later in newsletter) and all who attended had an enjoyable & stimulating weekend.

Finally, we continued to have our regular informal monthly meetings in the pub (see end of newsletter for details) and these & the WBG e-group are the place to go for the news/gossip in the world of Warwickshire bats.



## **Bat Fact**

The Spotted Bat (*Euderma maculatum*) which occurs from N.Mexico through western USA to SW Canada, has the longest ears in proportion to its body. At an enormous 4.5-5 cm. long compared with a head-body length of 6-7.7 cm., they make the species unmistakable. Only some species of the genus *Plecotus* (up to 4cm. compared to a head-body length of 4.5-7cm.) come close.

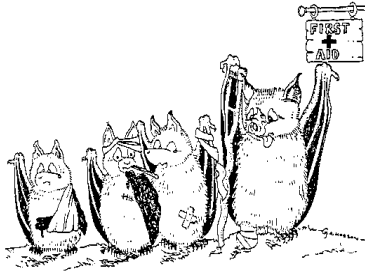


## **WHATS ONGOING?**

### **WBG & Rugby Borough Council**

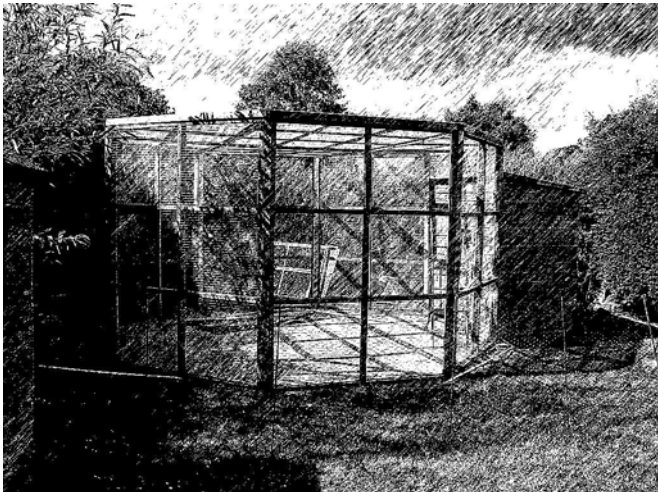
We have made some useful contacts at Rugby Borough Council and these have resulted in the start of a couple of bat box schemes in the borough, with the prospect of more to come. Pete Maule of WBG has installed 12 bat boxes at RBC's Great Central Way Nature Reserve in Newton, and 3 boxes at Cock Robin Wood, Dunchurch. Pete will monitor the boxes on behalf of WBG & RBC throughout the summer.

## Warwickshire Bat Hospital



The Warwickshire Bat Hospital is a project set up by WBG member Susie Duke. The hospital takes in sick and orphaned baby bats, and you may have seen some of the TV & newspaper coverage the WBH has managed to generate over the past 12 months. Part of the work Susie is doing is to look at ways of re-introducing captive reared bats into the wild. This is a notoriously difficult thing to do.

WBG has been supporting the setting up & running of the project. In 2001, we were able to obtain an old aviary, and after some conversion work, install it at the bat hospital as a safe outdoor flight area.



Once again, the famous Pete Maule did a lot of the initial conversion work and a team of WBG members helped with the erection. Since then WBG has supplied materials for heating & lighting and some additional flooring, the work coming mostly from Susie's long-suffering boyfriend Tony. Finally, we have obtained an infrared video camera for the important monitoring work. Individually, John Waller has given a lot of technical support & other members continue to involve themselves in various ways.

WBG will also continue to help out with the cost of vets bills, medicines & most important, mealworms!

If you would like to know more about the bat hospital visit [www.bat-hospital.org.uk](http://www.bat-hospital.org.uk) or telephone Susie Duke on 01564-782612.

## WBG & FWAG

The Warwickshire office of the Farming & Wildlife Advisory group have obtained a grant from Stratford District Council to mount a major bat box project in the Stratford area. A number of bat boxes of woodcrete construction in three different designs have been purchased, and WBG are supplying 10 of our "Warwickshire" style inspection boxes. FWAG & WBG will be working together on the siting of the different designs, and monitoring them throughout the year. Hopefully much useful data can be gathered on the best placing and the designs preferred by different species.



## WHATS COMING SOON?

A full and exciting programme of events for the year is being formulated and will appear in a follow up newsletter to be published soon (*honest!*), but in the meantime there are one or two items to include in your diary now.

Our chairman, **Dr Paul Elliott**, is giving a talk to **SE Staffs Bat Group** entitled "Bat conservation in **Warwickshire**" on **Tues. 12<sup>th</sup>. Feb.** Julia Summerton of **SESBG** is also a WBG member & WBG members are very welcome at any of their events.

Of particular interest in the **SESBG** programme is a talk on **Tues. 12<sup>th</sup>. March** by **Dr. Dean Waters** of **Leeds University** "Echolocation, Bats & Moths". Any of you who saw Adam Hart-Davis' programmes on TV over Christmas will have seen Dean & his wonderful Egyptian Fruit Bat.

**WBG** have got yet another of the countries leading bat researchers in April. **Dr. Gareth Jones** of **Bristol University** will visit us on **Fri. 12<sup>th</sup>. April**. Not to be missed! (For further info. on these see "Diary").



## **Bat Fact**

The Chinese Bat ( *Myotis Sinosus* ) can manoeuvre so well in confined spaces that it appears to fly sideways and backwards, as well as to hover.

### **BOOK REVIEW**



**Silverwing by Kenneth Oppel**  
**Hooder Children's Books**  
**ISBN 0-340-74348-4**

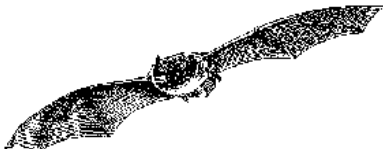
Watership Down, there's a good children's book, but there aren't many bats in it. How about *Wind in the Willows*? There's loads of animals in that, but still no bats. No wonder some people don't get the right impression about bats given that there are virtually no positive images of bats in children's fiction.

One notable exception to this is *Silverwing* by Kenneth Oppel.

*Silverwing* tells the story of Shade a small, insectivorous, silverwing bat. Shade is the runt of his colony, but he is very inquisitive and he finds out much about the world that many of the other members of the colony don't know. The reader follows Shade on his annual migration to the colony's hibernaculum, but he becomes lost on the way and has many adventures en route.

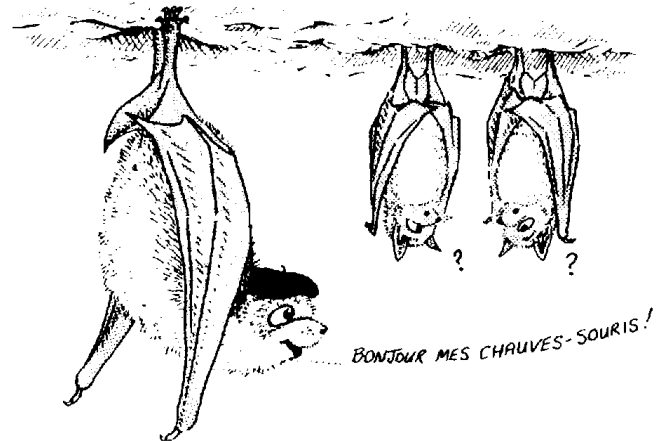
Kenneth Oppel has taken real facts about the life of bats and blended them into his story and we see everything from a bat's perspective. The reader gets an impression of how it might be to see the world through sound; how much food a small insectivorous bat actually needs and so on.

So, it's pro-bat, gets its facts right, and on top of this it is a really good read. I'd recommend it to anyone, even grown - ups. (John Waller-age 36).



### **THE THINGS I'VE SEEN!**

I am fortunate to holiday in the south of France where my brother in law's house backs onto forest. Apart from wild boar, rare tortoise, buzzards, occasional snakes, lizards and beautiful butterflies there are several species of bat.

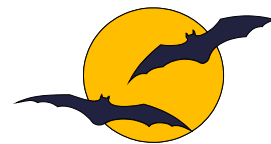


Kuhl's Pipistrelle (38kHz) is usually the first bat which can be seen, hunting at the forest edge or above the tree canopy and often with late feeding house martins. I have also seen a Noctule flying and feeding much higher with swifts.

So imagine the scene - sitting on the terrace, balmy evening temperature, bottles of French wine and fresh bread 'n cheese for supper watching bats perform stunning aerial acrobatics for your entertainment. Good eh?

The "Pips" often fly quite close and because it is usually still very light they are easily and clearly seen. One evening I saw a slightly lumpy bat struggle past pumping hard to keep airborne and the reason - it was carrying a baby! The baby was latched neatly under the mother's wing and this interesting sighting occurred on successive evenings.

Rod & Jo



## **Bat Fact**

Injuries to bat wing membranes heal amazingly fast. For example, a hole with a diameter of 2cm in the wing of a flying fox will heal within a month.

## BCT NATIONAL BAT CONFERENCE Nottingham Univ. 31Aug-2Sept 2001.

Last September's Bat Conference was so well attended that not everyone could find a seat for the Lecture Theatre talks, and some workshops filled up so quickly that if you weren't on Speed you stood no chance of signing in! All of the lectures were illuminating and most were very entertaining indeed. Prize for the 'cutest' has to go to Dean Waters and his fruit bat, filmed in high tech experimental conditions (the corridor outside his office where he had hung different thicknesses of wire with bells attached). His work showed that his Egyptian fruit bat used both sight and echolocation to evade the wires, which were randomly placed for every flight 'run'. Not to be missed was the talk by Phil Cannings, Wildlife Liaison Officer for Bedfordshire Constabulary about the ramifications of the CRow Act. Very interesting. A copy of Bats And The Law will shortly be available from the WBG book box if you would like to know more. Delegates were supplied with abstracts for most of the lectures, which helped enormously, especially if you could get to read them before some of the talks. This year's conference will (hopefully) be in Reading, not too far away for WBG members to get to, and well worth it.

### National Bat Conference - A Personal Experience

There was a 'downside' to the conference. Firstly not enough thought and/or planning had gone into the registration for delegates arriving on the Saturday rather than Friday. It wasn't BCT's fault that they couldn't gain access early enough to be set up and ready for arrival time, but the scheduling of the Chairman's Introduction only 15 minutes after registration meant that no-one had time to get to their rooms to freshen up. We hadn't travelled as far as some, but I felt the need for a tidy up. When we did try to get keys there was no-one to get them from, although one delegate tried for over half an hour to get someone to answer the bell at the 'porter's desk'. That aspect could do with a rethink or conversely inform delegates of the routine before they get there. Again not entirely the BCT's fault but the catering wasn't all it could have been. The food was very good but for those on restricted diets, vegans, and lacto-vegetarians, it was a battle and a half to find out what it was you were being given to eat! An outside caterer had been brought in to do the buffet lunches and nothing was labelled, fish and cheese products were on the same serving plate and the staff didn't seem to know what was what. And while I think about it, for a buffet lunch, it is really places to put down plates and drinks that you need, not the odd chair to sit on.

Conclusions on the weekend? Well, apart from the fact that I was made seriously ill by something with fish in it that I had been told was cheese, and that I felt I smelt like the council rubbish tip for the first half of Saturday, until I could get into the room for a wash, I had a very enjoyable conference. (Dot)

PS If you go to this year's conference, try not to sit at the same table as Henry Schofield for dinner..... (well, not if you want a second glass of wine that is!)



### DIARY

**1<sup>ST</sup>. Monday in each month-** WBG has its informal get together/planning meeting at the **Virgins & Castle, Kenilworth 8.00pm** onwards. For directions see previous copies of the Echo or ring John Waller (024 76 449741) or Rob & Dot (01788 550139) for directions.

**12<sup>th</sup>. February 7.30pm-** SE Staffs Bat Group talk. **Dr Paul Elliott " Bat Conservation in Warwickshire."**

**12<sup>th</sup>. March 7.30pm-** SE Staffs Bat Group talk. **Dr Dean Waters "Echolocation, Bats & Moths"**

WBG members are very welcome at both of the above events. SESBG talks are held at the Education Unit, Main St., Whittington, Nr. Lichfield. Please 'phone 01543 432 270 for further info. & directions.

**12<sup>th</sup> April 7.30pm-** WBG talk. **Dr. Gareth Jones "Out of the Dark, into the Light-A Scientific Approach to Bat Conservation"**. This will be held at the Westwood Site, Warwick Univ.. For directions see previous copies of the Echo or ring John or Rob & Dot as above.

If you've got access to the internet, remember you can find info. about all these events & much more at [www.warksbats.co.uk](http://www.warksbats.co.uk). To keep up with all the latest happenings/gossip in the world of bats why not join the e-group. E-mail [info@warksbats.co.uk](mailto:info@warksbats.co.uk) & John will sign you up.



### Bat Fact

Not all the " Bat Facts" contained in this newsletter are 100% accurate.