



The Echo



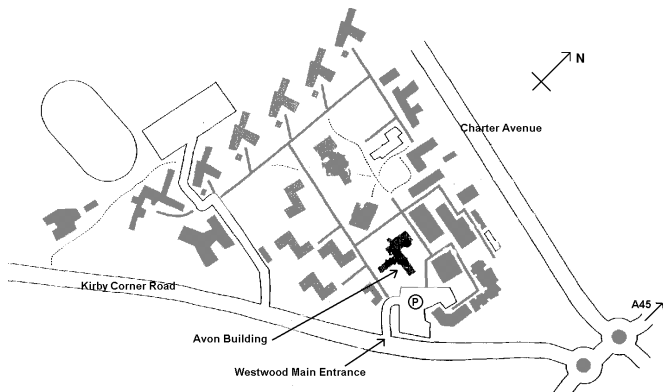
Newsletter of the Warwickshire Bat Group

March 2000

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING – 2000

The Annual General Meeting of Warwickshire Bat Group will be on Thursday 6th April 2000, in the Senior Common Room, Avon Building, Warwick University, at 7.30 pm. There will be the usual Chairman's, Treasurer's and Membership reports, as well as space on the agenda for Any Other Business. Do try to make it if you can, but if you can't and there is something you would like raised under A.O.B. then 'phone John and Julia Waller on 024 7644 9471 or Dot on 01788 550139.

The Avon Building can be found on Warwick University's Westwood campus in Coventry.



REGIONAL MEETING – FEBRUARY

February's regional meeting was at Bronsil House and Rod Müller attended on behalf of Warwickshire Bat Group. Much of the discussion related to biological survey work in which WBG is not involved currently, however the following may interest members,

- BCT funding – this is a serious issue because BCT have very little in reserve and probably not enough to pay their officers for more than a month. They desperately need donations from anyone.
- Survey Manual – Tony Hutson is putting together a manual for batworkers who are asked to survey land, property, trees etc. It is unlikely that it will be available before 2002.
- Bats In Trees – this leaflet from BCT is to be reprinted soon.
- Survey Work – BCT are considering the way surveying is done, with a need for a professional qualification for batworkers (NVQ?). They also want to remind anyone undertaking such work to ensure that they have adequate insurance cover or indemnity.
- Bats In Buildings – packs (leaflets and poster) are now

available from BCT.

- Gloucester Bat Group – GBC are planning to run some underground training sessions, in the Forest Of Dean, covering geology, equipment, safety, etc. More information as and when it is available.

BORIS, THE OLDEST BRITISH BAT.

Batworkers working for Avon Wildlife Trust have come across a ringed Greater Horseshoe bat in a cave on a protected site at Bathford near Bath.

When the bat was originally ringed, in 1976, he was thought to be about four years old and this now makes him approximately 28, and if he survives another four years he will be the oldest bat in the world. The bat was hibernating in a cave where the entrance was too narrow for all but the slimmest of people to gain access and it was when Biodiversity Officer Phil Quinn, who broke a rib in the process, and the new voluntary warden squeezed through, that they came across the ringed bat. New grilles have been installed at the caves to make sure that all the bats are safe from disturbance.

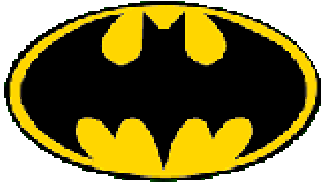
Nicknamed Boris, the bat was originally ringed by Dr Roger Ransome, and is said to be in excellent condition and should be around for many years to come.

Greater Horseshoe bats are one of the rarest bats in Britain, their numbers having declined from an estimated 30,000 at the turn of the century to approximately 5,000, spread over 15 colonies in southern England and Wales. Changes in farming methods and the destruction of hedgerows and woodlands have reduced the animals' habitats and supplies of insect food. New drugs for cattle prevent dung beetles, one of the mainstays of their diet, from thriving in open fields.

NEWSLETTER DELIVERY

At least a third of our members now have access to email so if you like to receive future newsletters electronically then please tell us. This will save the Bat Group both time and money.

We have also recently started sending general batty news and information by email to those members that request it. If you are online and don't already receive this but would like to then just drop us a line. You can email the Bat Group on batgroup@jwaller.demon.co.uk.



THE BATMAN INTERVIEW

Dr. Paul Elliott – Chairman Warwickshire Bat Group 1995 – present day

Dr. Paul Elliott is (in his own words) 41, married, with two bat-fanatic daughters.

How long have you been interested in bats?

10 years.

How long have you been involved in batwork?

Also 10 years.

How did you get involved in the first place?

I was teaching biology in Wiltshire at the time and heard through a colleague that English Nature were trying to resurrect the local batgroup by running a training course. It seemed like a good way to use my experience as a biologist and educator in conservation work.

What has been your most embarrassing bat moment?

Mistaking some scraps of binliner for a cluster of bats in the apex of an old barn (and getting excited because 'they' looked like an unusual species!)

What was your most hilarious bat moment?

Taking a group of students out to watch bats during a fieldcourse in Dorset, failing to see any and then having one fly into the minibus windscreen as we drove back to the hostel.

And the saddest?

The one occasion when I had to deal with a hostile roost owner. Sad because I was leaving the bats at his mercy and sad because his mind was so closed. I can accept that some people do not want bats in their roof, but he was not even prepared to listen to someone trying to help him.

Where is the most exotic place you have been, to do batwork?

It must be the fieldcourse I went on in Arizona with Merlin Tuttle of Bat Conservation International.

Where was the most uncomfortable place?

I try to avoid too much discomfort!

What has been your most dangerous bat-related experience?

As a good batworker, I am cautious and so have never been in any real danger. I did once climb a ladder onto the flat roof of a three storey house. I rather regretted having done this when it was time to come down.

Desert Island Bats

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

Pallid bat (SW, USA) - it would keep the scorpion population down

Brown Long Eared - for its looks and personality

Daubentons - keep the mosquitoes down and so easy to identify

Livingstone's fruit bat - for its cuddly fur and startling orange eyes

Noctule - good company

Little Red fruit bat (Australia) - great characters

Spotted bat (N. America) - wonderful fur

Malay Leaf-nosed bats - I would want one really ugly one

And if you could choose only one of the eight?

Noctule

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

Bats: Biology And Behaviour by John Altringham because it covers so much in such a readable way.

And your bat related luxury?

The BCT's bat suit.

And Finally

How many batty T-shirts have you got?

Only 5

And soft bat toys?

4

Lastly

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

To buy a big area of farmland and gradually convert it to bat-friendly habitat.

SUPPER AND A BAT WALK

The National Herb Centre, near Banbury, has a range of attractions for all the family, and one of these is a bangers and mash supper followed by a guided bat-walk. Sadly this year's batwalks are already fully booked, which has surprised the Herb Centre. Lorraine, who was at Compton Verney, is working there now. Other ideas for a day out range from workshops on designing a culinary, spiral or medieval herb garden to photography of herbs and plants. The National Herb Centre is on the Banbury Road, Warmington, Nr Banbury, Oxon. (Tel: 01295 690999)

THE SPATIAL IMAGER – A WHITE STICK WITH A 'BAT SENSE'

A new high-tech white stick with a unique 'bat sense' could give blind people 'second sight'. Called the Spatial Imager, it is based on echolocation – the way in which bats emit ultrasound pulses to manoeuvre their way around obstacles in the dark and hunt down their prey. Bats listen for the ultrasound echo as it reflects from the object in its path. By measuring the time from the emission of the pulse to receiving the echo, they are able to work out how far away they are from the object. Bats build up a picture of their world through a complex series of measurements.

Scientists from different disciplines at Leeds University are using the principle of the bat's guidance system to try to produce a white stick for blind people to enable them to build up a picture in their brain – or more accurately a mind map - of what is around them. The white stick would send out ultrasonic pulses and translate the echoes back into small vibrations in the handle to the fingers of the user, enabling the information received to be built up into a 'tactile map' of obstacles in front, around and above. The theory of the mind map is this: pick up any object, then close your eyes. By holding it, you have used touch to create a picture of the object. Closing your eyes and feeling for the objects on your desk is the same. When you touch something it registers as a position in your mind, and gradually the gaps are filled in. The map in the brain could be generated, not by touching objects, but by detecting them via ultrasonic signals received back as vibrations. It would mean the user would be provided with a map of objects up to 9ft away, and relayed not by sound but by touch, leaving their sense of hearing unaffected.

Prof. Deborah Withington (neurophysiologist), Dr. Dean Waters (biologist and bat expert), Prof. Brian Hoyle (electronics), and Dr Malcolm Povey (food scientist) are developing a prototype and a commercially viable version is hoped for within two years. The simplest version will be in the form of the traditional cane. Pairs of small, light and inexpensive ultrasonic speakers and microphones will be attached along the shaft of the cane. Each speaker will beam a pulse of ultrasound in a specific direction. The microphone will then detect the echo from any nearby object up to 9ft away. The encoded echo is then sent to some processing circuitry in the handle of the cane to be relayed to the user in the form of a vibration from receptors or transducers. Each set of microphones and speakers will have their own receptor in the handle at a specific position, so the user will know whether objects are to the front, left, right etc. The next stage will be human trials.

From The Daily Mail, 22nd February 2000

BAT DETECTING DAY

(Although not quite in our area this may be closer to some of our members than last year's detector workshop at Coombe Abbey was.) This bat detector workshop with Colin Catto of the Bat Conservation Trust is being run jointly by Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Wildlife Trusts and the BCT, on Saturday 20th May, 10.30am – 4.30pm, at Northmoor Trust, Little Wittenham, Oxon. Places are limited so booking

is essential. Contact Selina Morrisey on 01865 775476 for details and reservations. Other batty events in their area are:-

Sun 14th May. Bat Day. Foxholes Reserve. (Contact Reg Tipping on 01295 251073)

Sun 21st May. Warburg Open Day followed by evening batwalk. (Contact Selina Morrisey on 01865 775476)

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

6th April (Thurs.) - Bat Group AGM – 7.30pm, senior common room, Avon Building, Warwick University. (see front page)

12th May (Fri.) – Batwalk at Upton House – 8.00pm start. This walk is led by bat group member Keith Blundell. Upton House is found on the A422, 7 miles NW of Banbury, 12 miles SE of Stratford-upon-Avon national grid reference: [SP371461] <http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/>

17th May (Wed.) – Batwalk at Tocil Wood, Gibbet Hill Road, University of Warwick, Coventry [SP300756]. – 8pm. Organised by WWT and the Bat Group. Lead by bat group Chair, Paul Elliott.

21st May (Sun.) – Burbage Common Open Day, Hinckley [SP445953] – 10am until 4pm. This is an open day at with lots of wildlife related stalls and events. The bat group will have a stall at this event.

27th May (Sat.) – Batwalk at Coombe Country Park [SP400795] – 8.30pm until 10pm. £1 adults, 50p children. Organised by Coombe Park, booking is essential on – 024 7645 3720.

2nd June (Sat.) – Batwalk at Brandon Marsh Nature Centre [SP380763] - 9pm Organised by WWT, assisted by the Bat Group. Booking is essential on 024 7630 8977.

10th & 11th June (Sat. & Sun.) – Godiva Weekend – Memorial Park, Coventry. The bat group will have a stall at this event.

17th June (Sat.) – Batwalk at Bedworth Sloughs [SP349870] – 9pm. This walk is lead by bat group member John Waller.

8th July (Sat.) – Bat Group batwalk at Abbey Fields, Kenilworth [SP285723] – 9pm. Lead by bat group Chair, Paul Elliott as part of National Mammal Week.

15th July (Sat.) – Bat Group batwalk at Kenilworth Common [SP295730] – 9pm. Lead by bat group Chair, Paul Elliott.

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

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

26th August (Sat.) – European Bat night – more details later in the year.

26th, 27th & 28th August (Sat., Sun. & Mon.) - The Town And Country Show - Bank Holiday Weekend – Stoneleigh NAC. The bat group will have a stall at this event.

16th September (Sat.) – Bat Group batwalk at Stockton Locks – 7.00pm – more details later in the year.

NEVER MIND THE BULLOCKS, HERE'S THE SLUGS.

Episode 2...here's the slugs

Long, long ago in a newsletter far, far away I told you about some of our adventures while taking part in the National Bat Monitoring Programme. For those of you who missed it, or have mercifully short memories, where most people who write about the NBMP would tell you about the number of bats they recorded and their various species, I told you about thistles and the lack of bats and BEEF CATTLE. True to this principle, I had promised to tell you about monitoring for Daubenton's bats with particular reference to SLUGS!

I should explain before I go any further that I'm not very good with slugs, especially after one camping trip to Wales that was so traumatic that I still bore anyone in range with the story, after a few pints. You should also remember Dot's barefoot state (for those of you who need to know these things, Dot says the only thing to remove squashed dead slug off the soles of her feet is salt crystals and lots of scrubbing).

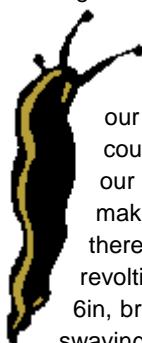
Anyway, way back in the Summer of '98, Dot and I were given a stretch of the River Avon in Newbold, Rugby, for our Daub. survey and for once this seemed as if it would be fairly straightforward. It was along what was described as a 'Riverside Walk', which by implication suggests something that runs alongside the river. When we first went to recce. this, we did walk nearly a mile along a stretch that ran right by the water, until we got to the section we actually had to survey. (Later we found out we could access this point directly from a nearby road. Typical.) However, for the next mile the path spent some time near the water, some time a fair way away from the water, with a good bit of scrub in between, and some time over 20yds away, with a ditch and thick hawthorn as a barrier! Having found that this meant we couldn't divide the walk up into anything like equal parts and that there was a total lack of good landmarks, we realised we would have to work by pacing out our intervals and then groping vaguely about for clues to find the monitoring points. Don't know about the rest of you but this seems about par for the NBMP course. Ideas about fluorescent markers, reflective tape etc. are all well and good until you try leaving them on a path which has public access.

We set out on the appointed evening and as we strode purposefully along our route out to our starting place, we tried to fix in our minds how our stopping points would look after dark. As we went, pipistrelles passed just over our heads going the opposite way as if they were trying to tell us something. We reached the turning point, waited for starting time, and set off. Now, on the way out we hadn't seen a slug, not even a silvery trail across the path, but of course, it hadn't been important then to keep even strides and to try to keep exact count of them. The first section had one or two slugs to cause a slight evasive chop in the stride, but there was still some usable light in the sky and the first stopping point was easy to find anyway. By the next section it was starting to get quite difficult to avoid them. From there on it was Nightmare on Slug Street.

Now, despite the fact that slugs and snails play 'Invasion of the Killer Zombie Slugs' round our back door every time we have a vaguely damp evening, I wouldn't wilfully stomp on one. This is partly due to my respect for all living things, partly due to how horrible it feels, and the terrifying thought that it

might cause you to skid and fall down amongst the loathsome, putrescent, suppurating..... (Sorry, getting a bit carried away there). But it's mostly due to knowing that the person following is Dot, and if there's one thing worse than squidding something that looks like an animated present from a Great Dane, it's treading in the squidge in bare feet!

Finding the correct stopping places had started to become a real problem by the third stage, and then came the points where we had to leave the path and push through the long grass and bushes to get to our vantage points by the water. I already knew slugs could climb. The big one that lives in the air-brick by our drain and gorges in our compost bucket, often makes its way round the wall at head height. But there is something both eternally fascinating and revolting about capturing in the spotlight of your torch a 6in, brown, crinkled, orange-frilled, pulsing bag of slime swaying at the very end of a tall, single blade of grass and about to crawl onto your thigh.



I don't remember how many Daub. passes we recorded that night (very few, this is us,) but I can't seem to forget the black shiny hard little beasts, the long squashy-looking brown ones, and worst of all, the fleshy coloured translucent ones. Thank you for the bat emergence times NBMP but in future could we have one more vital piece of information. WHEN IS SLUG EMERGENCE TIME?

WING DAMAGE

In the recent edition of Bat Care News, Maggie Brown wrote an article about her observations in dealing with wing damage. She wrote, - Bats can often fly and function normally in the wild with even quite sizeable holes in their membranes and can be found with marks or blemishes in the membrane that are of a different colour to the rest of the membrane and are probably evidence of natural repairs. However, tears in wings, from the edge into the membrane are often more difficult to resolve. Bats spend a lot of time maintaining the condition of the membrane, stretching it over their muzzle, and membrane condition often deteriorates in a bat that is too ill or injured to groom its wings.

A ripped wing can mean that the bat has no 'lift' for flight. Depending on the cause of the damage the normal supply of blood is lost and crisping occurs. Tears along a bone run the risk of infection and 'dieback' in the bone. Early advice was that stitches could be used to fasten the edges together, and the Americans have been using veterinary glues for some time, however experience has shown that some bats will groom the glue off again. Yet, one case, in time. the wing showed signs of improvement and the bat was heading for release when he suddenly died for no apparent reason. By giving food, rest and shelter there is a chance that the membrane will heal. Just because it is ripped does not mean that a bat cannot be released back into the wild, but it is a difficult decision to make.-

For a full (photo)copy of this article and Maggie Brown's review of 'Captive Care And Medical Reference for Rehabilitation of Insectivorous Bats' by Amanda Lollar and Barbara Schmidt-French, which is in the same issue (no 24) of Batcare news, contact Dot on 01788 550139.