



# The Echo



Newsletter of the Warwickshire Bat Group

May 2001

*Well by now all the bats should be awake and we should all be ready to go.*



*If you slept through the winter like this one, here are a few things you might have missed.*

## **BATMAN & ROSIE**

On the 14<sup>th</sup> March, at Warwick Univ., we were lucky enough to have a visit from Dr. Henry Schofield who was the subject of the wonderful 'Batman & Rosie' programmes on Radio 4 last autumn.

Even without the presence of Rosie, Henry proved to be a really entertaining speaker, as well as an informative one. He explained to us the lack of previous research on Bechstein's bats and how he had finally been able to set up his radio-tracking project. The importance of bat boxes in this work was not lost on many of us, particularly Pete(Maule)! However, the smell of a fair sized colony of Bechstein's in a large concrete-style roost box is probably something most of us will happily leave to the imagination, as are the encounters with hornets.

Henry's explanation of how he collected his data, and how he used it to compile a picture of the bat's foraging and their needs from the environment was as clear as his personal experiences were vivid and often amusing. With the help of his lap top and projector, even I could follow the statistical methods used and what each was designed to show( Rob- O level Stats...Failed).

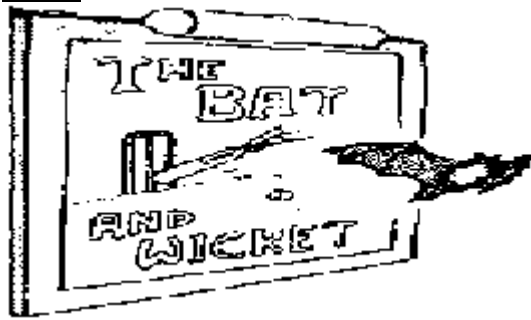
*Henry intimated that there was a chance the BBC might be interested in another little series for this year, but in the mean time those of you who missed the original programmes or who would like to hear them again could try lobbying Radio 4 for a repeat, this time in the evening*



## **WBG AGM - 29th MARCH 2001**

For this year's AGM we tried out a new venue, St James' Church Hall, Old Milverton, Leamington Spa. This turned out to be a pleasant change and meant that we were for once meeting in a building that boasts a bat roost, though sadly without any obvious residents in March. Given everyone's lack of enthusiasm for stuffy business meetings, our chairman, Paul Elliott, had decided to lighten the event with the inclusion of a selection of silly jokes gleaned from the internet and a light-hearted quiz. The latter gave a terrifying insight in to Paul's record collection. [ *Sample joke: Two bats hanging in a cave observing an approaching bat worker. One bat says to the other " You'd think all the blood would rush to their feet, wouldn't you?"* ] Paul gave his chairman's report and apologised that he hadn't had time to write a detailed summary, but felt that the group had had another satisfactory year participating in a good number of bat walks and PR events, as well as supporting the NBMP. We had begun through our hibernation surveys to forge closer links with the National Trust but this had unfortunately been interrupted by the Foot & Mouth outbreak. John Waller reported that the group's finances were still in a healthy state, and that on the membership side we had had a net gain of 5 in the last twelve months. As Paul has found his workload at the University becoming more and more demanding several people had previously said they would be willing to take on more active roles in helping to run the group, and these were all confirmed. Finally future events were discussed [many of which are listed at the end of this newsletter]. *If you would like to see the full minutes, contact John Waller & he can send you a copy by post or e-mail.*

## WE'RE GOIN' DOWN THE PUB.....



We are indeed still going down the pub on the first Monday of the month [except for Bank Holidays when it's the second Monday] and we'd be very happy for more of you to join us. The get together is still at the Virgins & Castle, High St., Kenilworth, from about 8.00 and you'll find a map to help you in previous copies of the Echo. If you need more detailed directions you can ring or e-mail myself or John Waller & we'll do our best not to confuse you.

We know it's a long way to travel for many of you, but it really is coincidence that it's within staggering distance of the Chairman's house! We needed somewhere fairly central that was pleasant and quiet that wouldn't object to many of us sitting over a couple of soft drinks all night. As these aren't formal meetings the number of people there varies, but they're a great way to just get together and swap batting anecdotes, pass on information and pick the brains of some of the other members. It's also a good place to talk over ideas for future events the group might want to try. They're always relaxed and sociable occasions, other topics than bats are permitted, and if you've not met many of your fellow members before, you'll find we're a wonderfully diverse bunch and hardly any of us are actually barking.

So why not give it a try this summer, and bring your bat detectors for a quick spin around Abbey Fields afterwards.



## WBG E-GROUP

"Daddy, what's an e-group?" Well, at one time WBG used to ask members if they had an e-mail address and send out any snippets of bat news/ gossip that we heard. Trouble was, this was a bit one-way traffic So instead we now have the e-group. Members of the e-group automatically receive all the messages posted to the group, but can also reply, add their comments or pass on any news of their own. A number of people have already joined and it has already proved a very efficient way of passing news and interesting bat articles found in the media, a couple of which follow in this newsletter. If you have access to the internet and would like to join in

then e-mail John at [info@warksbats.co.uk](mailto:info@warksbats.co.uk) and he will sign you up.

*There is, however, one problem with this. It does tend to mean that we are in danger of forming an 'elite' within the group, leaving people who are not online out of the picture about all sorts of events and stories that crop up at short notice. (It is very difficult to get a newsletter typed, copied and posted out in much under a week, and postage costs start to mount drastically when things keep changing as often as the can with some thing like the foot & mouth.)*

*We have talked about suggesting that members could send in a stamped addressed envelope which could be used to pass on urgent news, or a digest of the more interesting messages, but this would seem to perhaps be unfair as the cost of collecting the e-mails is almost nil if you're on line anyway. Maybe some sort of 'phone buddy system could work?*

*If you have any suggestions could you please send them to John Waller, tel: 024 7644 9741 or at the WBG address, or contact The Echo.*

**The following articles have appeared on the e-group recently:**

### **Bats in the gallery** **(New Scientist 31st March 2001 - p19 Newswire)**

Cambodia's National Museum in Phnom Penh is under attack - from bat dung. The building is home to 2 million wrinkle-lipped and tomb bats. Wildlife groups are loath to see the bats removed but museum curators say their acidic guano is destroying precious works of art. "Normally the big problem is the odour," says Laura Finn of the Bats in Buildings programme in Florida. The two groups have compromised - they're building a concrete ceiling to catch bat droppings.

### **BBC Wildlife December 2000**

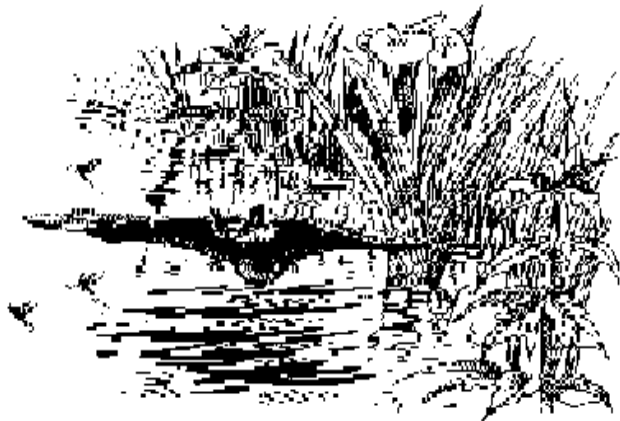
"Until recently, all European bats were believed to be insectivorous, feeding on a variety of flies and other insects on the wing. But research has now shown that the Greater Noctule bat *Nyctalus lasiopterus* - the largest species of bat in Europe - eats other vertebrates," writes Maxine Fay Miller. Studying Greater Noctule bats in the Pian di Novello Natural Reserve, Tuscany, scientists G Dondini and S Vergari from the University of Florence discovered that bat dropping contained not only the remains of insects such as dragonflies but also the feathers of robins and blue tits. The bats are believed to capture unsuspecting birds asleep in night shelters, thus avoiding attack from sharp claws and beaks. (Journal of Zoology, vol. 251).



## **THE NATIONAL HERB CENTRE**

Situated on the B4100 just outside the village of Warmington, near Banbury (between junc.11 & 12 M40) the centre is: *"home to the only Research & Development station solely devoted to investigating sustainable medicinal herb production in the UK."*

The herb centre is open to the public daily from 9am. to 5.30pm (or until dusk in the winter) and the visitor can browse in the Plant Centre which has over 500 varieties of herb plants available, walk in the display gardens or along the nature trail.



There is a children's play area, and light refreshments & a delicious range of ice creams can be found in 'Greenways'. For more substantial fare you could visit the Herb Bistro in the converted 19<sup>th</sup>.C. barn, although this is very popular so booking is often advisable, particularly at weekends: - phone 01295 690033 for Bistro bookings. In the Herb Shop you can find many items associated with herbs and their uses and a range of interesting books.

Throughout the year the herb centre also stages a varied programme of special events and activities such as organic cookery demonstrations, workshops & courses on herbs for health and natural beauty, and a number of Bangers & Bats evenings. These consist of a bangers & mash meal in the Herb Bistro with the centre's delicious herb sausages, followed by a bat walk in the centre's woodland nature area. These events have proved extremely popular and as numbers are limited booking for them is essential. Members of the bat group have been involved with setting up these walks & helping to run them, and WBG (our own Pete Maule) has donated & sited a number of bat boxes in the woodland. We are monitoring these regularly and are pleased to report that they showed signs of use within 3 weeks of being put up at the end of last July.

Since then they have produced 1 bat in residence on each of 3 checks (probably the same, stroppey - & you can't blame him - male pippestrelle).

*For more information about the centre or any of its special events: The National Herb Centre, Banbury Rd., Warmington, Nr. Banbury, OX17 1 DF*

*Tel: 01295 690999*

*Bistro (direct line) 01295 690033*

*Fax: 01295 690034*

*E-mail: [info@herbcentre.co.uk](mailto:info@herbcentre.co.uk)*

*Website: [www.herbcentre.co.uk](http://www.herbcentre.co.uk)*

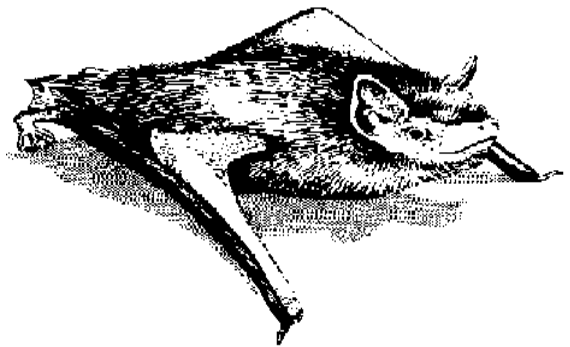
## **COOMBE ABBEY BAT BOXES**

Martin Baxter, one of the rangers at Coombe Abbey Country Park and a WBG member, has sent us the following message: *"I thought you might like to know the early season results of the Bat Box Survey at Coombe. Having managed to inspect and clean 42 of the 50+ bat Boxes in the park's Duck Decoy Woodland we found just 2 bats in residence - (not really surprising given the long wet Spring). Survey 4<sup>th</sup> May. The first was a very light weight male Pipistrelle (don't ask me which species!) and the second was a large very aggressive female Noctule. As far as I'm aware this is the first Noctule to be recorded in a Coombe Bat Box and brings the total number of recent species using the boxes to 3 - having found a Whiskered Bat last year. (Pete - both the bats were found in your triangular boxes that went up last June as replacements in existing locations, so your efforts continue to bring success). Bat droppings were also found in 13 other boxes although none were regarded as fresh.*

*I propose to survey the boxes 3-4 times a year now on a regular basis (as per 'Stebbing's and Walsh' guide lines) - I'll keep you posted."*

## **Taking the high road.....**

Keith Blundell, a WBG member for many years, will soon be leaving the area to take up a new job with the National Trust for Scotland near Aberdeen. Keith has never balked at travelling from one end of Warks. to the other for bats, but I think the new distance may prove a wee bit too much. All of us that know him will miss his quiet, gentle humour, & huge knowledge of plants and wildlife (& how to cook it!). We wish him all the best & hope he will keep in touch.



## **Bat Walks and Talks/Event**

Over the page you will find the diary of events so far for the summer. We have organised some walks of our own, but mostly we are joining forces with others. It would be good to have a few more WBG events, but for this we need some help. If you would like to organise an event/walk near you but need some help and support, or if you just want to suggest somewhere new we might try, then please contact Rod Mueller (see of diary for details). Rod kindly took up the job of co-ordinating events at the AGM & will advise you or put you in touch with another experienced member.

You will also see that there are 2 walks listed organised by South East Staffs. Bat Group. Julia Summerton of SESBG is also a member of WBG & invites any of us, especially those in the north of Warks., to join them.

## Dates for your Diary

### **Friday 18th May 20.45**

Tamworth, by Borrowpit lake. Meet in the Snowdome car park. Bat walk by the river Anker, Map Ref: SK 208 034 South East Staffs. Bat Group

### **Saturday May 19th 21:00 - 23:00**

Whitely Wood, Beverley Avenue, Nuneaton. A bat walk organised by Maggie King of Nuneaton & Bedworth Borough Council.

### **Wednesday May 23<sup>rd</sup> 20:00 - 22:00**

*Tocil Wood, University of Warwick, Coventry. A bat walk on behalf of WWT.*

Meet at Rootes Residence car park.

### **Saturday, May 26<sup>th</sup> 20.30**

*Fur and Fangs @ Coombe Abbey Country Park, Coventry. Cost: £1 adult, 50p for Passport to Leisure holders and children. Places need to be booked in advance. Phone: 024 7645 3720.*

### **Friday June 1<sup>st</sup> 21:00 - 23:00**

WWT Brandon Marsh, Coventry

*A bat walk (probably preceded by a short talk). Phone Warwickshire Wildlife Trust for details & booking.*

### **Friday June 8<sup>th</sup> 21:30 - 23:30**

Draycote Water, near Rugby.

*A bat walk. Organised by Ryton Pools Country Park and Severn Trent Water. Meet at the Rangers Office. Children must be accompanied by an adult. Cost: Adults £1.50, Concessions £1, Family £3.50. Booking essential. Phone 01827 872660.*

### **Saturday June 9<sup>th</sup> & Sunday June 10<sup>th</sup>**

*Godiva Festival, War Memorial Park, Coventry. Any involvement (stall etc.) not yet decided.*

### **Saturday June 16<sup>th</sup>**

Solihull Wildlife Day - stalls in Solihull High Street. Any involvement not yet decided.

### **Wednesday, June 20<sup>th</sup> 21.00**

*Bat Walk @ Brueton Park, Solihull Organised by Solihull Council Green Team.*

### **Saturday June 23<sup>rd</sup> 21:00 - 23:00**

Abbey Fields, Kenilworth. A bat walk. Organised by WBG.

### **Saturday June 23<sup>rd</sup> 22.00**

Bat Walk I @ Ryton Pools Country Park

*The first of two 2 mile walks following the paths around Ryton Pools Country Park Meet at the Visitor Centre. Cost: Adults £1.50, Concessions £1, Family £3.50. Booking essential: 01827 872660.*

**Saturday June 30<sup>th</sup> 22.00** Moths & Glowworms & have a go at bat detecting @ The Stratford Greenway Meet at the Milcote Picnic Area car park (between Clifford Chamber & Welford)  
Cost: Adults £1.50, Concessions £1 Family £3.50.

### **Saturday July 7<sup>th</sup> 21.00**

*Bat walk at Kenilworth Common for National Mammal Week. Organised by WBG.*

### **Saturday July 7<sup>th</sup> 22.00**

*Bat Walk II @ Ryton Pools Country Park. Meet at the Visitor Centre. Cost: Adults £1.50, Concessions £1, Family £3.50.*

Booking essential: 01827 872660.

### **Saturday July 14<sup>th</sup> 11:00 - 17:00**

Spon End Wakes Festival, Spon End Coventry. A stall etc. yet to be decided.

### **Friday July 20<sup>th</sup> 21:00 - 23:00**

Victoria Park, Leamington. A bat walk organised by WBG.

### **Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> August, 20.45**

Drayton Manor Park (near Tamworth)

*Bat walk – may sound unlikely, but they have a nature reserve area - ask at the gate (main entrance, security on duty) where to park. Map Ref: SK 195 014*

South East Staffs Bat Group

### **Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> August 19.30**

Bat Night @ Kingsbury Water Park A short talk followed by hot jacket spuds in The Old Barn Coffee Shop, then a bat walk Meet at the Information Centre. Booking essential. Phone: 01827 872660. Cost (includes food): Adults £3.50, Concessions £3.00

### **Friday August 17<sup>th</sup> 20:30 - 22:30**

WWT, Brandon Marsh, Coventry

*A bat walk, (probably preceded by a short talk) Phone Warwickshire Wildlife Trust for details & booking.*

### **25, 26 & 27 Aug Town & Country Show,**

Royal Show Ground, Stoneleigh, Warks.

*We will be running our usual information stall for the weekend.*

### **31<sup>st</sup> Aug. – 2<sup>nd</sup> Sept National Bat Conference**

*At the University of Nottingham. Organised by the BCT.*

**For more information on any of the above events contact Rod Mueller:**

**Phone 01926 832174**

**E-mail rk\_mueller@hotmail.com**

**or visit WBG website.**