



# BAT NEWS



Newsheet of the Warwickshire Bat Group

Issue 7 Summer 1997

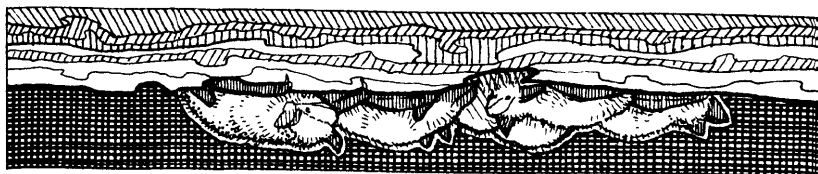
## The Bat Group in 1997

(Paul Elliott)

The fairly cold winter, followed by a warm spring has given our bats a good start to 1997. The cool temperatures through the winter will have helped hibernating bats to stay in their energy saving state of torpor. The warm spring has provided bats with an insect bonanza to feed on after completing hibernation. This should bode well for this year's mothers and we could see a good number of births in June and July. This may lead to lots of lost and disorientated youngsters, so it could be a busy summer.

There are plenty of opportunities for you to get actively involved in bat work coming up. The group is making Coventry a focus for attention this year, working with the Agenda 21 project to find out more about bats within the City's boundaries.

We will also be involved in the National Bat Monitoring Project that the Bat Conservation Trust is co-ordinating.



Details of both of these projects appear in this newsletter.

There was an excellent response to the letter inviting members to attend a training programme to raise their bat expertise. It should not be long before we have an extensive network of people in the county who are able to help develop the Bat Group's activities.

## National Bat Conference. 5-7 September 1997

(Paul Elliott)

Each year the Bat Conservation Trust holds a national conference that usually attracts over two hundred people. The conference venue moves between England, Scotland and Wales because the event is sponsored by English Nature, Scottish Natural Heritage and the Countryside Commission for Wales. This year is the turn of Scotland, with the conference being held at Stirling University.

The conference is a chance to meet people from throughout Britain who have one thing in common: bats! Its a meeting that attracts a very wide range of people from young to old, novices, experienced amateurs, professional conservationists and academics. The atmosphere is very friendly and informal, helped along by generous bar extensions. There are talks, workshops, art displays, posters and a chance to purchase all manner of bat related items from T-shirts to earrings, Christmas cards to bat detectors. Its a great way to learn more about bats.

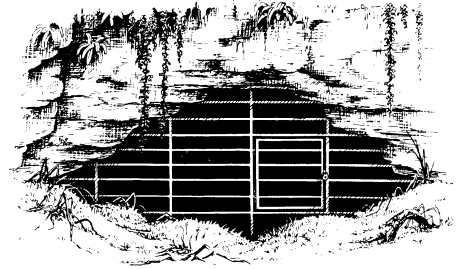
The cost will be finalised shortly, but is expected to be around £100 inclusive of registration and full board accommodation. BCT members receive a discount and will be sent conference details shortly. Non-members pay a little more and can get details from the BCT at the following address: **The Bat Conservation trust, 15 Cloisters House, 8 Battersea Park Road, London SW8 4BG, Telephone 0171 6272629.**

## Compton Verney Ice House

(Paul Elliott)

Discussions are taking place about the reconstruction of a derelict ice house on the Compton Verney estate near Stratford-on-Avon. A number of parties are interested in providing funds for the restoration which would incorporate features to make the ice house attractive to bats.

Many ice houses around the country are used by bats, particularly as hibernation sites. They provide just the right conditions that bats need for hibernation, they are humid and maintain a stable, low temperature whilst insulating the bats from frost. By incorporating “bat bricks” in the reconstruction and installing a bat grill that allows bats access, but not people, it should be possible to provide Warwickshire's bats with a much needed winter retreat.



## Coventry's Bats

(Paul Elliott)

When I consulted the records for bats in Warwickshire and Coventry a couple of years ago, one of the most startling things was the lack of records from Coventry. Even in the centre of London there are records for five different species, so the idea that Coventry could be a bat-free zone just did not make sense. I believe that the problem is one of under-recording: we just do not know what bats are there.

Coventry has some significant swathes of green wildlife areas and corridors which ought to provide good bat habitat. There are also the parks, such as Memorial Park, with large mature trees that should provide good roost sites and feeding grounds. It is tempting to associate bats with the countryside, but it is not necessarily so. The green areas of Coventry are actually species rich and they contrast with the pesticide sprayed, monoculture farm land of much of the countryside beyond the city boundaries.



To find out more about the bats present in the city, the Bat Group is working closely with the Biodiversity initiative of Coventry's Agenda 21 programme. This summer we will launch a campaign to raise awareness of bats amongst the people of Coventry and encourage them to let us know where the important bat sites are in the city. We will also carry out survey work to try and establish what species are present. If you are interested in helping with this work, come along to the next meeting

## Bats And The Law

Bats and their roosts are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. There are three main areas of protection which means it is illegal to:

- Intentionally kill or injure any bat.
- Disturb a bat at roost
- Damage a roost site or obstruct the entrance

Should any work be planned that may disturb bats or their roost, English Nature must be consulted.

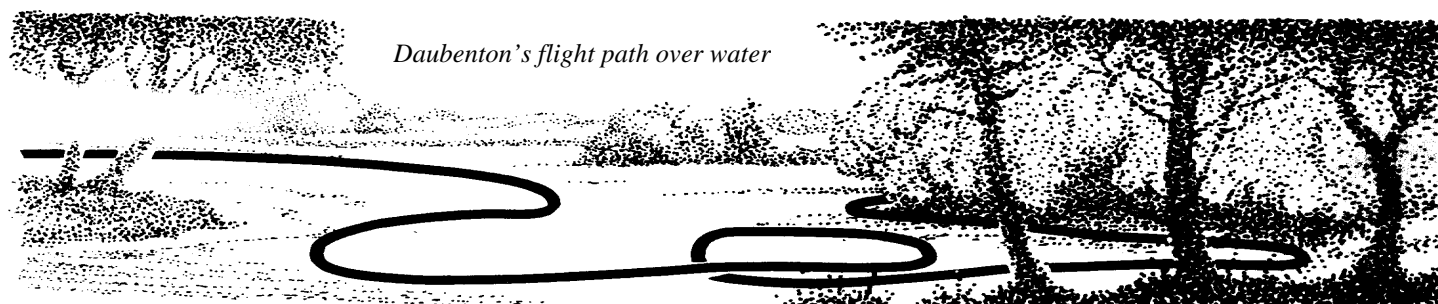
## The National Bat Monitoring Programme

(Paul Elliott)

The NBMP is entering its second year. Many members of the Bat Group helped with the projects last year, when we carried out surveys of the county's Lesser Horseshoe roosts. This year the project will focus on roost exit counts for pipistrelles and detector surveys of Daubenton's along water ways.

The Pipistrelle roost counts will involve exit counts at roosts on one night between 8 June and 15 June and a second between 16 June and 23 June. Since this is our commonest bat it should be possible for lots of people to get involved.

The Daubenton's count will involve four detector surveys, two between 26 July and 4 August and two between 5 August and 14 August. For safety reasons this survey should not be done alone, so even if you not have a detector, you may be able to help by partnering someone that has.



Full details of the surveys will be available nearer the time. If you did a Lesser Horseshoe count last year and gave your name and address on the report form, then you should receive information straight from the BCT. If not, then you need to register with the BCT (see address elsewhere). The project will also be co-ordinated at a local level. If you want to be involved, but did not contact Paul Elliott last year, please do so by phoning 01203 523221 and leaving your name, address and telephone number so that you may be contacted.

## Tales from a Lower Division

(Rod Müller)

At one time it was my ambition to visit every football league ground in the country. In the lower divisions, where terracing still prevails, I enjoy rubbing shoulders with like minded fans, politely questioning referees' decisions and in good footballing tradition, trading obscenities with opposing fans. There is still a feeling of nostalgia when you stand in the rain at the end affectionately known as the "Cowshed" but these idyllic days are numbered as even small clubs move towards all-seater stadiums.



Last year I went to watch Burnley play an evening match at Walsall's new Bescott Stadium - a concrete box with small seats! A clean and tidy stadium totally lacking in atmosphere but the low powerful floodlighting did give an excellent view of the pitch.

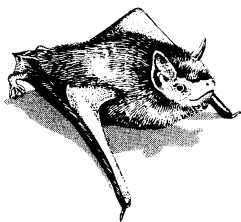
The match was dire. Burnley had fallen behind to an early goal and the away fans were unusually quiet for Lancashire folk. The second half continued as the first half had been played, without commitment or passion, but both sets of fans were nevertheless glued to the "kick 'n rush" spectacle being played in front of them.



Ten minutes into the half my eyes wandered above the glare of the floodlights and to my very great joy two Pipistrelles were hawking in this half-light. They

continued to give a spectacular aerial display for a full 35 minutes, until the final whistle, when they disappeared into the darkness.

The crowd, engrossed by the activities on the pitch, were oblivious to the display only a few feet above them. I paid £12 for my seat and with an exhibition of truly wonderful aerobatics thrown in for free, I reckon that's good value to a bat and ball person! To be honest I don't remember the final score. Football - it's a funny old game!



### FLIGHT DEFINITIONS

- Stooping - Catching aerial prey after a steep dive
- Hawking - Catching prey during flight
- Gaffing - Gleaning from the water surface
- Gleaning - taking prey from any surface
- Pouncing - Landing on the ground to pick up prey
- Flycatching - Catching prey in flight after a short foray from a perch

### Tales from the Tube (Rod Müller)

Visiting London on business I invariably travel on the underground and amuse myself during these journeys watching the antics of my fellow travellers. To be honest when you are crammed into carriages like sardines and bouncing along at unimaginable speeds there is little else to do and I marvel how some people are able to create space around themselves in such difficult circumstances.



Many commuters simply read paperbacks during their journeys avoiding conversation or eye contact, both strictly forbidden on the underground. The paperback trick allows the use of an elbow to gain a few precious inches. The Jews who travel my route and recognisable by their impressive black hats, long curly sideburns and upside-downy, back-to-fronty Hebrewy books are usually afforded ample standing space - you don't mess with HIM upstairs! And, the occasional damp armpit is a classic for creating space especially if it's attached to something with greasy hair and zits. Oh my! The power of the person.

Well, on one occasion and quite by chance I managed to fight my way to a seat in a small chest-crushingly tight corner between two attractive females and whilst bouncing along together might sound fine, it was almost impossible to breath out in case excessive touching caused offence. So I resorted to an old book trick too.

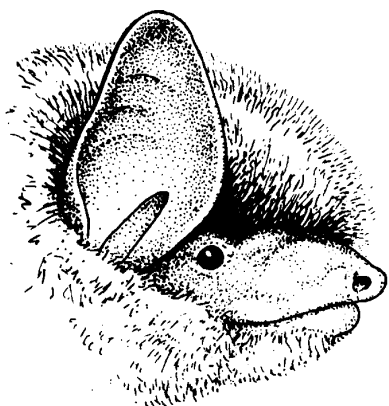
I opened a copy of '**The Natural History of Hibernating Bats**' at a chapter relating to Energy Balance and became engrossed in Homeothermic endotherms and the influence of weather on **arousal**. It was at this point I became aware that the looker on my right was also reading about **arousal** and when I turned full face and smiled at her, she said something like "Arousal?" "Sad bastard" and moved. Oh my! The power of the book.

Now the story does not quite end here. Picture the scene - the carriage is stuffed full of people in their own little worlds when a whopping great moth and I mean big, appeared from nowhere and flew straight down the middle of this tightly packed carriage and the previously impenetrable mass of passengers parted like the red sea. Panic! Good job it was not chased by a bat.

And, later that day I was coming back from a concert and sat alone on a platform bench at Farringdon waiting for the next train. It was pleasantly warm with an abundance of airborne moths attracted to the station lights. A single bat, probably a Pipistrelle, flying leisurely around had no problem finding a suitable meal and it was the first occasion that I have visually seen a bat catch its prey. What a good way to end the day!

## Bat Profile

### Daubenton's Bat (*Myotis daubentonii*)

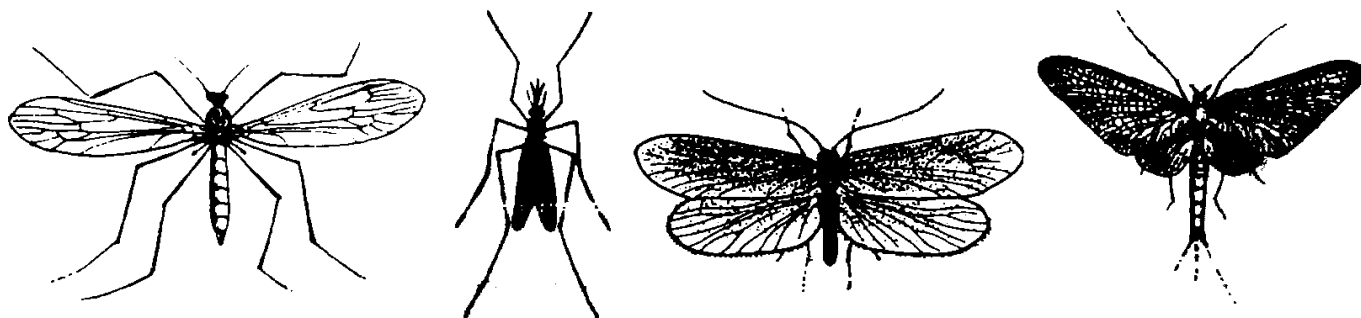


Daubenton's bat is a medium-sized species. It has a steady flight, often within a few centimetres of the water surface and is reminiscent of a small hovercraft. Daubenton's bats take insects from close to the water surface using their large feet as a gaff or the tail membrane as a scoop. Daubenton's bats fly at about 25kph or 15mph.

Their ultrasound calls range from 35-85 kHz and peak at 45-50 kHz. On a bat detector the calls are a machine-gun-like series of regular clicks for bursts of 5 to 10 seconds.

They usually feed within about 6km of the roost but have been recorded following canals for up to 10km. It is thought that they need to drink more frequently than some other species so the older name of "water bat" is quite appropriate but they often travel across land and occasionally feed away from water.

<b>Description</b>	<b>Head and body length</b>	45-55 mm
	<b>Forearm length</b>	34-41 mm
	<b>Wingspan</b>	240-275 mm
	<b>Weight</b>	7-12g
	<b>Colour</b>	Fur red brown, pale underneath. Pinkish face, bare around the eyes..
<b>Life cycle</b>	<b>Mating period</b>	Autumn & throughout winter.
	<b>Maternity colonies</b>	Late spring. Young: one, born end of June to early July, weaned at 6 weeks.
	<b>Colony size</b>	20-50 (up to 200)
	<b>Longevity</b>	Up to 22 years.
<b>Habitat and food</b>	<b>Summer roosts</b>	Trees; also tunnels, bridges, caves, mines, cellars; occasionally stone buildings.
	<b>Winter roosts</b>	Caves, mines, and other underground roosts.
	<b>Feeding habitat</b>	Over lakes, rivers and ponds.
	<b>Food</b>	Small flies (especially chironomid midges), caddisflies and mayflies.



## Diary

### Wednesday 7<sup>th</sup> May @ 8pm

Bat Walk led by Niamh Roche at Tocil Wood, University of Warwick. Meet in the car park at the rear of the Rootes residences.

### Monday 12<sup>th</sup> May @ 7.30pm

AGM @ University of Warwick, Westwood campus, Avon building, Staff Common Room (see map below). After the meeting there will be a showing of a video in the series "Wild Relations" entitled "With Wings On Their Fingers" about *Pteropus Scapulatus* - Northern Australian Little Red Flying Foxes.

### Sunday 18<sup>th</sup> May (11am - 4pm)

Bat Stall @ Burbage Common "Open Day" (between Earl Shilton & Hinckley). Volunteers required to staff the stall.

### 8<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> June (1 evening)

### 16<sup>th</sup>-23<sup>rd</sup> June (1 evening)

Possible dates for the National Bat Monitoring Programme Pipistrelle colony counts (see article in this Newsletter).

### Tuesday 24<sup>th</sup> - Thursday 26<sup>th</sup> June (10am - 3pm)

Bat and bird box making at Coombe Abbey Country Park. Bookings on 01203 453720.

### Monday 30<sup>th</sup> June - Thursday 3<sup>rd</sup> July

Bat Stall @ Royal Show, NAC, Stoneleigh, Warks. Volunteers required to staff the stall and thereby get free entry to the show.

### Saturday 26<sup>th</sup> July

"Who Dares After Dark" walk at Coombe Abbey Country Park. Bookings on 01203 453720.

### 26th July - 4th August (2 evenings)

### 5th - 14th August (2 evenings)

Possible dates for the National Bat Monitoring Programme Daubenton's detector survey (see article in this Newsletter).

### Friday 8<sup>th</sup> - Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> August

Bat Detector Workshop run by Gloucestershire Bat Group. Contact Mrs Miriam Glendell on 01453 791747 (evenings) for details.

### Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> August @ 8pm

"Bats & Burgers" at Coombe Abbey Country Park. Bookings on 01203 453720.

### Wednesday 20th August @ 7.30pm

Bat & Balti night @ Kingsbury Water Park, Bodymoor Heath, Sutton Coldfield, West Mids. A short talk followed by a balti and then a bat walk. Advance booking essential on 01827 872660.

### Saturday 23rd - Monday 25th August

Bat Stall @ Town & Country Show, NAC, Stoneleigh, Warks. Volunteers required to staff the stall and thereby get free entry to the show.

### Friday 5th - Sunday 7th September

National Bat Conference @ Stirling University (see article in this Newsletter).

