

Bat Conservation Trust



BCT Update for Kent Bat Group 24th January 2013

****Latest News****

- South East Bat Conference – the presentations and notes from the afternoon priorities session are now available on the BCT website at: www.bats.org.uk/pages/seconference.html
- Contract for Natural England's Bat Advice Service – BCT has been awarded the sole contract for Natural England's Bat Advice Service. Martin Rhodes of Natural England has written to all Volunteer Bat Roost Visitors (VBRVs) about this, confirming that the new contract commenced on 1st January 2013. The Helpline email address is: enquiries@bats.org.uk and the phone number is: 0845 1300 228.
- The Helpline Officer for Kent is Katy Hillman (khillman@bats.org.uk) and she is happy to answer any questions that Kent VBRVs have about the new service. Completed roost report forms should now be sent roostreports@bats.org.uk
- A Thank You to NBMP Volunteers from the Government – the Minister for Natural Environment and Fisheries, Richard Benyon has praised the the Bat Conservation Trust's National Bat Monitoring Programme. After being presented with our report State of UK's Bats which summarises the populations trends of 11 British bat species. Benyon said he "was very interested to read this report" adding "Thanks to the volunteers who have worked so hard on the monitoring of bat populations."
- New Bat Care Coordinator – Jess Barker has taken over as the BCT Bat Care Coordinator from Bea Ayling (who left BCT earlier this month to join the RSPB). You can contact Jess via email: jbarker@bats.org.uk or call the Helpline on: 0845 1300 228

Projects and Research

- Churches Officer – Bats, Churches and Communities is a five-month pilot project, based in eastern England, but relevant across the UK. The Churches Officer (Laura Bambini) is working with Church of England, other church organisations, congregations, and bat-workers to grow relationships, provide information on bats, develop guidance resources and improve the support network available to church users. The aim is to demonstrate approaches that we hope to extend into a larger longer-term project subject to funding.
- Soprano pipistrelle exclusion research – this project (University of Bristol with BCT) is studying what happens to bat colonies that are excluded from houses. The first year's field work went ahead at sites in the North West of England over the summer of 2012. We are grateful for the efforts of the bat workers who have responded to our requests for information on sites where exclusions are planned. Please continue to share this information as further roosts are needed for the second year of field work in the spring.
- Churches research – soprano pipistrelle surveys took place in several eastern counties in the summer of 2012. Mitigation and deterrent trials for the Natterer's bat study were undertaken by the research team from the University of Bristol at a small number of churches in East Anglia. Preliminary data are being analysed this winter and will inform research plans for this year.

(A second Special Research Bulletin was circulated to bat groups earlier in the year with an update on all three of these projects. If you have any questions or for further information please contact Dr Karen Haysom, Director of Conservation at BCT: karenhaysom@bats.org.uk)

- Biodiversity and built environment – University College London and BCT have recently begun a joint project looking at the integration of biodiversity into the built environment. This is an EngD studentship.
- GIS Project – We are underway with a project mapping the UK for bats and habitats. We are currently at the early stages of creating GIS maps of bat records (and thank all those who have contributed records). The maps will be hugely beneficial for bat conservation with multiple uses ranging from strategic planning to local on the ground conservation, to research via predictive modelling. Going forward, we will be engaging with local bat groups and bat carers, planners and other audiences to discuss the kind of mapping outputs they would find useful. The use of the GIS bat data will have wide ranging applications and could feed into regional enhancement areas and green infrastructure initiatives. Any queries please contact Dr Liat Wicks, Head of Biodiversity at BCT: lwicks@bats.org.uk
- Ash Dieback – The confirmation last autumn of dieback in ash trees has implications for bats and UK biodiversity from the loss of trees to the disease and potentially from the measures put in place to limit the disease spread. There is more information about bats and *Chalara* dieback of ash trees on the news pages of the BCT website at: www.bats.org.uk/news.php/
- New Woodland Officer – Dan Merrett (dmerrett@bats.org.uk) started in post at the beginning of December as BCT's new Woodland Officer (replacing Carol Williams who has been promoted to Director of Conservation).
- Roost website – Reminder that we would like people to continue to add mitigation case studies (good and bad) to the website: <http://roost.bats.org.uk> . Any questions please contact Kelly Gunnell, Built Environment Officer at BCT: kgunnell@bats.org.uk
- Habibat – this is a partnership between BCT and EcoSurv for an integral bat box for developments but with an associated monitoring scheme to understand how effective they are. The Habibat website is: www.habibat.co.uk . Volunteers are being sought to help with the monitoring of the boxes, if you are interested please contact kgunnell@bats.org.uk
- Building for Biodiversity – BCT is part of a pilot scheme looking at giving the managers of existing buildings a way to enhance their biodiversity value and get recognition for it. We are looking for industry partners to support the new Building Biodiversity Assessment Tool. Please contact Kelly for further information kgunnell@bats.org.uk
- Royal Institute of British Architects Courses – BCT is running a number of courses aimed at architects in association with RIBA. For more information contact: kgunnell@bats.org.uk

National Bat Monitoring Programme

- Online data entry – the NBMP team are developing a new online data entry system. Web pages have been created for the Colony Count and will be launched to volunteers this year. These will enable volunteers to download their survey forms/instructions (with the option of continuing to receive printed copies in the post), input their data and view all their counts in the form of raw data and summary charts. Over the winter we will be developing pages for the Hibernation Survey and hope to have these ready for volunteers to input their data shortly after the hibernation survey period. The next stage will be Waterway and Field Surveys, probably completed for 2014 as they are more complex due to the need for digitizing route maps.
- Grey long-eared bats – NBMP has carried out a project with Orly Razgour, a PhD student at the University of Bristol, with the aim of increasing our knowledge of the distribution of the grey long-eared bat. There are only eight known grey long-eared maternity colonies in the UK and a very small number of other individual records. Droppings were collected from roosts across this species' range and DNA analysis was carried out to identify species. One

new grey long-eared bat roosts was discovered in Devon. Droppings from other roosts were mostly identified as brown long-eared bat but other species were also identified including serotine, Natterer's bat and whiskered bat.

- NBMP survey coverage – we are looking to increase survey coverage in all UK countries and regions in order to be able to deliver species population trends at the country and regional level, so any help that you can give would be very valuable. Details of how to take part and an online sign-up form can be found at <http://www.bats.org.uk/pages/nbmp.html>

Bat Ring Sales

- BCT has taken over the sale of bat rings from the Mammal Society. Lisa Worledge is the main contact at the moment and she will be in touch with everyone who has purchased rings previously over the coming weeks. For more information or any questions please email lworledge@bats.org.uk

Publications

- Landscape and Urban Design for Bats and Biodiversity – available to download for free from www.bats.org.uk/pages/landscapedesign.html or can be purchased in hard copy from NHBS. This new publication presents simple but effective measures designers, consultants, developers and planners can use to enhance biodiversity on sites of all sizes with a focus on bats.
- Training for volunteers – a new brochure aimed at volunteer training and identifying the range of courses and materials available can be downloaded from the BCT website at: www.bats.org.uk/pages/volunteers.html
- Professional Training Standards – this project provides a set of standards for professional bat surveyors (consultants, ecologists, etc.) relating to bat work in the UK. These standards cover the variety of work that a professional bat surveyor may be asked to do and outline the level of knowledge and skills expected of an individual to perform key tasks. The standards are available from: www.bats.org.uk/pages/professional_training_standards.html
- Good Practice Guidelines – You can download the second edition (in non-printable PDF format) at: www.bats.org.uk/pages/batsurveyguide.html . Hard copies can be purchased from NHBS: www.nhbs.com/bat_surveys_tefno_154031.html . We will be reviewing the document periodically to assess the need for addendums and would welcome your feedback on any areas you have comments on. Please send any comments to surveyguidelines@bats.org.uk
- State of the UK's Forests, Woods and Trees: Perspectives from the Sector – this report was edited by the Woodland Trust with input from a range of organisations (BCT contributed to the biodiversity chapter). It is available from: www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/en/about-us/publications/Documents/state-of-the-uks-forest-report-4865.pdf
- Forthcoming publications – there is a new BCT publication due soon on guidance for lighting and bats. In addition BCT is working on a second edition of 'Biodiversity for Low and Zero Carbon Buildings'. Please contact Kelly Gunnell at BCT for more information on either of these publications (kgunnell@bats.org.uk).

Investigations

- Building and development remains the main source of bat crime and in 2012, our investigations officer was able to support the police in their investigations which resulted in three cases going to trial, all relating to the destruction of bat roosts in building/ demolitions works.

- The first at the beginning of 2012 resulted in a conditional discharge and just £85 costs despite the best efforts of the police's investigating officer. We provided an impact statement however this does not seem to have been considered by the magistrate. This was a very disappointing result and does nothing to deter developers. In our opinion it only served to demonstrate the low levels of awareness of this type of offence amongst both the judiciary and prosecutors who appeared to have disregarded supporting evidence that had been made available to them.
- Two cases followed in July and August with better outcomes. BCT provided impact statements and expert witness services to these trials which resulted in fines of £2500 and £7,500. In both cases ecological consultants reported these incidents and we would like to thank the bat groups, volunteers, consultants and investigating officers for their efforts.
- We continue to work with the police, crown prosecution service and magistrates to ensure bat crimes are not side lined. However, this remains difficult work to fund and we are very grateful to the bat groups and individuals who have already donated to this work. For more information on this project or to donate contact hmcfarlane@bats.org.uk 020 820 7168.

Bat Care

- BCT is currently seeking funding to further our bat care work and support new and current carers. If successful this will include: bat care courses, a second edition of the Bat Care Guidelines, new courses and guidance for veterinary professionals as well as a bat care conference every two years.
- There is now a regular monthly BCT bulletin for bat carers. This goes out to everyone on BCT's list but we would be happy to share it with other people who are involved in bat care but not on our list, if you would like to receive it but don't currently please email jbarker@bats.org.uk

Membership and Fundraising

- Membership – growing BCT membership (currently around 5000) continues to prove challenging, however more members are needed to demonstrate to government and funders the importance of bats to the public. Pay monthly options have been initiated and we have a programme of recruitment at events and exhibitions this year. Volunteers are always welcomed at these events or if you other ideas of ways to help recruitment members please contact sballard@bats.org.uk
- Fundraising initiatives – 'adopt a bat' was launched in back in 2011; these wild adoptions are designed to be gifts (for yourself or someone else!) that support our native species. We also trialled Halloween community fundraising in 2011 and a new improved pack was produced for 2012. Some bat groups used the Halloween fundraising pack to do their own fundraising. If you did use the packs please let us know how you got on even if it wasn't for BCT we'd still love to know what works, and how much you raised for bat conservation.

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