

The Northern Natterer



Central Scotland Bat Group Newsletter
Issue 48 Spring 2007

THE NEXT IMPORTANT DATE

Don't forget the date of the AGM was changed and is now on Monday 23rd April at 7.30 pm at Scottish Churches House, Dunblane (opposite the west end of the Cathedral). Neil Middleton of BatMI fame will give us a talk entitled 'Radio Tracking Daubenton's - First you need a Bat!'

This will include the techniques for tagging - once you have your bat of course.

There will be a short business meeting, followed by cheese and wine, so come along and be both businesslike and sociable - why not bring a friend? They don't have to be *really* batty....

Other dates to remember:

It looks like a busy year, when you consider all the surveys that will be going on from May to September too!!

Saturday 4th May: Evening visit to the Natterer's roost at Aberfoyle. *Details from John Haddow*

Saturday 12th May: Spring into Action Day at Battleby - a day of practical workshops and tutorials for bat workers. *Contact Anne Youngman for details.*

Tuesday 22nd to Thursday 24th May: Roost visitor training for anyone wanting to gain a roost visitor licence. This will be

held in Dunblane. *Details from Anne Youngman*

Sunday 27th May: 'The Fling' at Doune Castle

1pm - 5pm: This is a family event hosted by WWF Scotland.

The bat group has offered to have a stand on the day and to help with some activities which may include: a bat treasure hunt, batty stories, making bat badges and dressing up in bat costumes!

There will also be other activities on the day including storytelling, puppet making and music and dance. Stirling Ranger Service and Argaty Red Kites will also be there.

Any offers of help on the day would be appreciated - *please contact Beccy Osborn or Anne Youngman*

Friday August 10th
Bat Talk and walk at Mugdock Country Park. *Contact Ian Pascoe*

Saturday August 25th
Stirling Ranger Bat Walk 'Twinkle, twinkle little bat'. The walk will be around the back of Stirling castle and be followed by a visit to the observatory at the Stirling Astronomical Society at the Highland Hotel. Volunteers needed to help - all welcome *Contact Ian Pascoe for details.*

Friday August 31st - Sunday 2nd September
National Bat Conference at the University of York.

Saturday 17th November (may be changed):
Scottish Bat conference at Battleby

From Anne's email:

"I now roost in the attic of Scottish Churches House. You might like to put my new contact details into your address book."

Anne Youngman (Scottish Bat Officer)
Bat Conservation Trust
Scottish Churches House
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Dunblane
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RADAR SAVES BATS AT WIND FARMS

It is feared bats could be threatened by wind farms. Bats at risk of being killed by the growing number of wind farms could be saved with the use of radar at windfarm sites. Studies in America have apparently shown large numbers of dead bats in the vicinity of the turbines.

Bat deaths at wind farms are thought to exceed those of birds and it is feared some species could eventually become endangered if action is not taken.

This was featured on the 6 o'clock news on BBC Scotland on 14th March, with Paul Racey and Barry Nicholls. BCT has been looking into the whole question of bats and windfarms, and they have recently sent out a questionnaire about the mini turbines which can be erected on houses. More information can be found on their website: www.bats.org.uk

**AND TALKING OF WEBSITES,
DON'T FORGET OUR OWN AT
www.csbats.org.uk**

If you would like anything added, or think it is getting out of date – please contact Ian Pascoe.

BATS & THE MILLENNIUM LINK

It seems like yesterday, but in fact it was in 2000, that this highly successful and innovative project began. Neil Middleton has produced a most interesting report on 'the results so far' which is available on www.batml.org.uk. Neil has also produced a CD version, which includes a number of bat fact sheets and details of BaTML publications.

Neil now has his own consultancy and can be contacted at:

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Specialist Bat Consultants
25 Killin Drive
Polmont
FK2 0QQ

Tel: 01324 710007

Mobile: 07877 570590

Email:

neil.middleton@echoesecology.co.uk

www.echoesecology.co.uk

[and of course, don't forget that our chairman John Haddow also set up in the consultancy business sometime ago.

Check out his website at:

www.auritus.co.uk]

BATS IN WINTER.....

RETURN TO THE OCHILS MINES



Brad Connor, Beccy Osborn, Lynsey Robinson and partner Mike, Kirsty Morrison and Catarina Rei

On a cold, wet Saturday in February, following one of the coldest weeks in an otherwise mild winter, a group of us revisited some of the mine adits explored one year before. Seven of us met up at Blairlogie, and to begin with three (Beccy, Brad and Catarina) scrambled up to the Blairlogie mine while the other four (John and Kirsty plus Lynsey Robinson and her partner Mike from Glasgow) made for the Airthrey Silver mine above Blairlogie Church. The Airthrey Silver mine is a very grand name for a narrow wet adit off the burn, but it turned out to have the only bat seen that day (a Daubenton's) as well as evidence of a feeding roost for a brown long-eared bat - droppings and yellow underwing moth wings.

We combined to visit the remainder – Balquharn Farm trial, Balquharn burn

East and West and Carnaughton Glen East and West. Once we scrambled and slithered our way to the Balquharn mines, the east adit was as wet as I have seen it, and most of us managed to swamp our boots. It was unilaterally agreed that Beccy should go furthest into the adit, meaning she was the only one thoroughly soaked. Like last year there were otter signs deep in the adit, plus lots of bat droppings – almost certainly from Daubenton’s bats.

No other bats were found that day, just the usual cave spiders and herald moths. The Balquharn farm trial is so-called because it did not yield any significant ore – it was less of a “trial” to get to than the others! There was no recent evidence of brown long-eared bat feeding there, only the old remains seen in 2006.

The photo gives an impression of the wet and windy weather that day – I was glad to get home to a warm bath afterwards! Reminder: next year, bring waders.

John Haddow

ABERFOYLE BAT RESERVE

As usual, stalwart members of the group have been trekking the hills, penetrating the hillsides and peering into castle walls in an attempt to find out where the bats all go. No answers really as the numbers found are always small. This year we found only two brown long-eared bats in the old Aberfoyle slate quarry, both hanging freely, with their ears wrapped under their wings for protection. This means that only the traguses (tragi?) are visible giving the wee beasties a rather devilish appearance.



John Haddow, Anne-Marie Campbell, Ian Pascoe and Andy Nyul, (Fay behind the camera) in Aberfoyle



The notice inside the tunnel entrance explaining its use by bats.



Aberfoyle ‘devil bat’ (brown long-eared)

DOUNE CASTLE

Following our visit to the bat reserve, and after a snack in the David Marshall Lodge, Andy, Anne-Marie and I returned to Doune Castle to count the pipistrelles there. The total of 19 was two less than the number seen on the 11th February. That was the highest number this winter and lower than most years. Another reflection of this mild winter?

John Haddow

BATS IN THE NEWS

From America: a Texas teenager who was bitten by a bat as he slept in his home in Houston has died of rabies. Rather ironically Bat Conservation International has its HQ in Austin, Texas. Contact www.batcon.org

Only 10 other people in the US have died of rabies since 1998 but *The Observer* newspaper of 14.5.06 does not report how many of these were due to bat bites. (See BCT website for up to date information on Bats and Rabies in UK)

Closer to home, a parti-coloured bat (vagrant in UK) has been found in a hall used for line-dancing in Freshwater, Isle of Wight; and the presence of a colony of pipistrelles in the old Galashiels College of Textiles put back the demolition of the building by Tesco, before making way for yet another supermarket.

BATS AND MAGNETISM

It has been discovered, according to an article in *'Nature'* volume 444, that bats navigate at least partly by sensing the Earth's magnetic field. Experiments similar to those carried out many years ago on pigeons and other birds lead to this conclusion. The bats experimented on were big brown bats *Eptesicus fuscus* in the US, but it seems likely that other species have a similar navigation mechanism.

ARBORTEERING

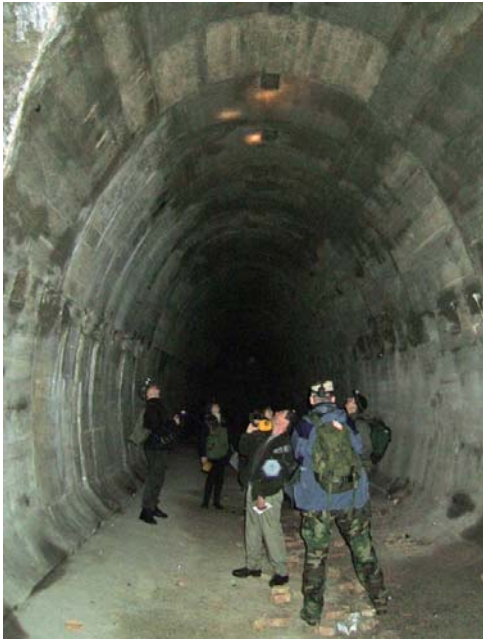
(a cross between arboriculture and mountaineering!)

On January 26th, the group was treated to an excellent and fascinating talk by Mark Robinson on surveying and managing trees for bats. While most of us have probably looked at a few old trees, poked our noses into likely rot holes and thought that bit of flaky bark might just be enough to house one pipistrelle, Mark is into tree climbing in a big way, to really assess any tree that has possible roost sites. He even uses a 'cherry picker' – not something our group is likely to get into! (apart, perhaps, from our fulltime environmental consultants). Sometimes if a tree has needed branches lopped, although they were actual or potential bat sites, it has been possible to remove them and then replace them by attaching props and struts to the remaining trunk. The bats are apparently quite happy with this arrangement, though the group felt that results were not always particularly aesthetically pleasing to human eyes! Mark left us three information Sheets:

1. Introduction to Arborteering (Bat Surveying)
2. Methodology for Surveying and Managing for Bats in Trees
3. Deadwood and Bat Roost Creation.

If anyone would like copies of these, please get in touch with Ian, or Mark Robinson at info@arborteering.co.uk, or on his website: www.arborteering.co.uk

GOING BATTY IN NIETOPEREK



In January 2007 John Haddow and I travelled to Poland to take part in the biggest hibernaculum survey of our lives (so far!). We joined around 40 other bat workers from Poland, Germany, Norway, Belgium, Holland, the Czech Republic and the UK. Our mission was to survey around 33km of underground tunnels at Nietoperek from sunrise to sunset on the 13th January.

The tunnels form part of a much longer defence system built from 1933 up to the Second World War – and in fact it was never completed by the time it was over-run by the Russians in 1944. At the time of building these were on the old eastern border of Germany with Poland. The tunnel complex contained a railway system linking the above-ground defence bunkers, as well as providing storage and barracks for soldiers. Above ground there are heavily fortified bunkers which give access to the tunnels. The Nietoperek tunnels now lie 150km inside the Polish border as a result of the changes decided by Stalin (and accepted by the US and UK) after WWII.

The tunnels and bunkers are of great interest to military historians (and to slightly strange people who like to dress up in Nazi uniforms and play at soldiers in them) as well as to bat enthusiasts. There are also people who believe the tunnels were used to hide great treasures and who are desperate to explore them to find it. This has resulted in some tension between people who want the tunnels kept closed in winter, to allow bats to

hibernate in peace and those who see an opportunity to increase tourism.

At present parts of the tunnel system are open to tourists during summer but “closed” during winter. I’ve put closed in inverted commas as “Bunker baggers” are able to find their way into the tunnel systems through some of the many entrances or partially ruined bunkers (many were blown up by the Russians in the fighting, or used for munitions practice when it was a Soviet military area, which it remained until the late 1980s)

Despite some disturbance from visiting bunker baggers, treasure seekers and bat counters the tunnels provide an exceptional site for hibernating bats in staggering numbers. Our total was nearly 37,000 bats!

In order to carry out such a huge count we were split into teams of around 4-5 people and each team given a particular section of the tunnel system to survey. It all sounds very straightforward until you discover that the maps of the system are not always accurate. A great deal of checking and rechecking was needed to be sure we were in the right place.

Seeing the majority of the bats is remarkably easy compared to somewhere like Doune Castle where bats are hidden away in inaccessible cracks and crevices. While there are some inaccessible places in the tunnel system bats most are seen on the sides or roof of the tunnel. It can be as easy as walking into your own sitting room and seeing a cluster of bats on the wall or ceiling [except you might have to walk 10km underground to get there! – John H]. While seeing the bats is often easy, identifying and counting them can be very difficult:

Firstly because there are *so* many bats all tightly clustered up together

Secondly because some bats (Daubenton’s in particular) often seem to get hidden under the big mouse-eared bats, and lastly because after a while ones neck and shoulders are in agony from looking upwards.

The team I was in spent 12 hours underground. We counted over 8,000 bats. In total the 9 teams counted 36,664. The most numerous species is the mouse-eared bat *Myotis myotis* (which is almost extinct in Britain) and not a single pipistrelle bat was seen!



Mouse-eared bats in the Nietoperek tunnels

The numbers of bats of different species (where this could be determined) are given in the table:

Species	No.	Species	No.
mouse-eared	22,378	BLE	553
Daubenton's	7,884	whiskered/Brandts	83
Natterer's	4,577	Bechstein's	21
barbastelle	1,062	pond bat	21
unknown	79	serotine	6
		Total	36,664

Taking part in the census felt like a once in a lifetime experience and we are very grateful to have been invited to join the team by Tomasz Kokurewicz from Wroclaw who organized the whole thing.

Anne Youngman

YOUR COMMITTEE:

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