

Locating bat roosts in Harlow

Mick Westby describes how a bit of dogged determination can lead to valuable observations of roosting behaviour

For some years before I got involved with bats, there have been Leisler's recorded in Harlow, but no roosts found. At the beginning of May, a Leisler's was found grounded at the Chantry, Harlow. It was decided to do a determined search to find the roost. On the first visit, on 6th May, two were heard and seen flying high, heading north. Great, we will move 200 yards south and try again the next day. Again, several were seen going north. Next, we checked at the southern end of the area. Guess what - they are behind you! After five more visits we tracked them down to one of four houses. Next night, we go mob handed to get them surrounded, and we get 21 bats



The grounded Leisler's in the Harlow flight cage prior to release
[Photo: Colin Edwards]

coming out of one house, most of them Leisler's with a few Common Pipistrelles. A couple of days later we go back with others who were interested in seeing them, only to find they had gone. A couple flew past but that was it. Where had they gone, who knows? The grounded Leisler's was released successfully in May.

While this was going on, a lady in another part of Harlow was going to replace her fascia board, but found she had bats behind it, so quite rightly she contacted us to find what to do. Off we go to check out what she had got, answer nothing, they had moved 5 doors along, where we counted 50 or more pips. Two nights later we go back to do a proper count but, lo and behold, they had gone. We found them 60 yards away at the top of some flats. Could it be that they were moving to try to outwit the sparrowhawk that was trying to catch them during one of our visits, or are Harlow bats just extremely good at hide and seek. Update on the second roost: a pip was found in July, in the flats where the roost had been. On release four days later, we checked to see how many were coming out; answer none, and even though there were lots of bats flying, there was no roost in the immediate area that we could find.

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Weald Country Park Bat Project

Graham Hart with a progress report from this prime Brentwood site

For the last two years I have been carrying out regular bat surveys with fellow EBG member Duncan Fisher at Weald Country Park, Brentwood. The park is owned by Essex County Council and is a mosaic of habitats such as wood pasture, lakes, woodland, ponds and fields.

In 2008 we became seriously interested in bats after encountering them when we were out doing pond surveys. We subsequently joined EBG, which stoked our interest further after meeting bat experts, going on guided



[Photo: Pat Hatch]

walks and attending courses. We then ventured into surveying via the BCT Waterways Surveys.

In 2010 we felt comfortable enough to set up a survey locally and, with the kind permission of Essex County Council Country Parks, we began to carry out fortnightly transect surveys at Weald. No previous formal bat survey work had been carried out in the park, so it was with some trepidation and excitement that we began surveying, recording and analysing our own bat recordings. We are new to bat sound analysis and have been very grateful of help from fellow EBG members.

Our primary focus in 2010 was to find out what bats were using the park and where they were. Routine transect surveys allowed us to dissect many of the different habitats at Weald in one evening, which provided us with a benchmark of data. We used Anabat and Duet detectors with Edirol and Sony MiniDisc recording equipment.

The most notable record we achieved in our first year was that of Barbastelle bat. However, Serotine and Nathusius' Pipistrelle (recorded in 2009 as part of a BCT survey) are also worthy of mention as these bats are considered scarce by BCT. We have also had 45 & 55 Pips, Noctule, Brown Long-eared, Natterer's, Daubenton's and probably other Myotis species which we are unable to separate from sound analysis alone.

Using the information from last year we have been able to adopt a broader and more flexible approach this year. We have moved toward surveying habitat zones in place of transects. This zonal method has also allowed us to concentrate our efforts in areas identified as hot spots by the 2010 transects and move into new areas too. This paid off immediately when, in April, we located an ephemeral Myotis roost as well as expanding on our knowledge of Noctule feeding patterns and other bats' movements.

As expected, surveys often raise more questions than answers, but the more we learn the more we chip away at some of the broader and bigger questions.

There is always something new and exciting to experience with bats and I think it's this insatiable quest to learn more that keeps us coming back; even when we know that we will never know everything

I think one of the most satisfying and important parts of this project at Weald has been the opportunity to provide a good site where other EBG members who are interested in or already practicing bat surveying can meet up and work together, share experiences and pass on their knowledge to others, whilst at the same time assisting in bat conservation at Weald.

We already have a core team of EBG members who help us on a regular basis when time allows in their busy schedules. These volunteers have been crucial.

This year we decided to advertise the surveys more widely and we have been rewarded with an increase in the number of people contacting us and we welcome such interest. Some of these people are new to bat surveying and do not yet record or analyse bat sound. We hope this experience will inspire them and they will take their interest further. Whilst we are happy for anyone with an interest in bats to come along and see what we do, our project is beyond the scope of the family bat walk and we seek mainly to attract those people who are interested in taking their bat work further through more formal survey methodology and analysis. Duncan and I are still learning and we understand how difficult it can be to develop this side of bat interest.

We want to continue the surveys for many years to come and gradually expand the project into other areas. This is only a small step on a very tall ladder but on the way up we hope to see more amazing things in the world of bats!



[Photo: Pat Hatch]

News in brief

- Bat care workers report baby bats being born much earlier than usual this year, with some Common Pipistrelles giving birth as early as the middle of May.
- EBG member Ella Barnett has written a dissertation investigating the effects of various factors on foraging activity of bats, following field work in the old chalk quarries at Grays. A summary will appear in the newsletter.
- A survey at Chalkney Wood (near Earl's Colne) found much higher levels of bat activity in an area re-coppiced two years ago than in areas re-coppiced last winter.
- A survey at Shut Heath Wood (Totham) found Common and Soprano Pips, Myotis and the first nightingale for several years, to the delight of the warden.
- 38 Noctules were counted out of a maternity roost at Colchester in June. A film of the emergence will be available for viewing on our EBG web site shortly.
- An emergence survey at Colchester Castle discovered a pipistrelle roost in the west wall.
- A stall at the recent Tendring Show attracted considerable interest and was judged a great success.

Bat Care

Sue Burton relates aspects of a hectic year!

The Bat Hospital and Ambulance Drivers have been working flat out this season in what has proved a busier than normal year. We have collected bats from all sorts of predicaments and situations, including:

The usual collection of cat casualties, a bat hit by a car, one poisoned by paint fumes, three found in a police station, one in a pond, one in a water butt and one came down a chimney. We collected 11 from one spare bedroom, 18 from a children's nursery and one bat who was flying around in a school assembly hall at the same time as they had a birds of prey demonstration going on!

We have driven hundreds of miles day and night, collecting bats from around the county and sometimes beyond. They all need feeding and caring for and some require veterinary treatment. Due to the sheer numbers this season, we have had to tie up ambulance drivers with feeding and caring for them with Jan, while others have been on the road and another group have been overseeing the flight cage. We have all been involved in releasing bats back into the wild. This is my third season and each year gets busier!

On top of all this work, we look for and try to identify roosts and advise people. We strongly believe that any bat that is grounded needs help - sometimes they are injured, other times they are starving and/or dehydrated. A few days of care and they can often be in a fit state for release. It is important that they are released as soon as possible at the site where they were found, as they know the roosts.

We have a great team of people working hard to directly help grounded and injured bats and to encourage and foster respect for these creatures. I am proud to be part of this dedicated group of people. If you want to get involved with the bat care side of Essex Bats Group's invaluable work, please contact Jan Ragg on 07734 265571 or Sue Burton on 07973 716318.

A full account of the year will appear in a future edition of the newsletter.

Essex Bat Group Members' Evening

Friday 2nd December, 7.30pm. Boreham Village Hall, Boreham

Bats of Trinidad

Daniel Hargreaves will give us a talk on his recent research trip to this Caribbean island

Trinidad is the southernmost island in the Caribbean and lies just seven miles off the coast of Venezuela. It has a rich diversity of bats, with approximately seventy species recorded, representing all the major feeding guilds and including the infamous vampire bats.

Daniel will give an illustrated talk about the amazing variety of bats, their ecology and recent bat conservation efforts in Trinidad. The talk will last about one hour with a mixture of photos and videos. More details will be included in the next edition of the newsletter.



**ESSEX
BAT
GROUP**

Events Programme 2011

Find out more about these fascinating creatures on guided walks, talks, surveys, colony counts and much more. Some events require advance booking and some may request a donation. At most, a number of bat detectors will be provided to be shared between the group. For your own comfort and safety please bring along a torch and wear suitable clothing and footwear. In the event of heavy rain or strong winds the event will be cancelled. Contact event leaders for further information. Becky Gibson, Programme Secretary (beckyg@essexwt.org.uk).

Fortnightly emergence counts of soprano pipistrelle maternity roost at Hanningfield Reservoir Visitor Centre, Hawkswood Road, Downham, Billericay, CM11 1WT. EBG members are welcome to attend to witness the spectacle of this large roost emerging at dusk. Contact Pete Cloughton for dates and times. pete.cloughton@btinternet.com

Wednesday 27th July. Hanningfield Reservoir Visitor Centre emergence count. Public event for which a donation will be requested. Call 01268 711001 to book in advance.

Monday 8th August. Weald Country Park Bat Survey. Contact Graham Hart for details. thehart@btinternet.com.

Saturday 13th August, 8pm. Bourne Valley Local Nature Reserve, Colchester. Bat Walk. Booking essential on 01206 853588. £3 donation per adult. Free to EBG members.

Saturday 13th August, 7.30-9.30pm. Fingringhoe Wick Family Nocturnal Nature Walks, Fingringhoe Nature Reserve. Booking essential on 01206 729678. £5 donation.

Thursday 18th August, 7.30-9.30pm. Hanningfield Reservoir Visitor Centre and Nature Reserve Family Bat Evening. Booking essential on 01268 711001. £5 donation.

Friday 26th August 7.30-9.30pm. Bedfords Park Visitor Centre, near Romford. Family Bat Evening. Booking essential on 01708 748646. £5 donation per adult.

Friday 26th August, 7-9pm. Fingringhoe Wick Family Nocturnal Nature Walks, Fingringhoe Nature Reserve. Booking essential on 01206 729678. £5 donation.

Monday 5th September. Weald Country Park Bat Survey, Brentwood. Contact Graham Hart for details. thehart@btinternet.com.

Saturday 10th September, 7.10pm. Colchester Castle Park. Bat Walk. Booking essential on 01206 282962. Free to EBG members. Numbers limited.

Saturday 10th September, 6.30-8.30pm. Fingringhoe Wick Family Nocturnal Nature Walks, Fingringhoe Nature Reserve. Booking essential on 01206 729678. £5 donation.

Saturday 17 September, 6.45pm. High Woods Country Park, Colchester. Bat Walk. Booking essential on 01206 853588. £3 donation per adult.

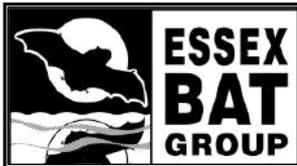
Saturday 24th September, 6.40pm. Colchester Castle Park. Bat Walk. Booking essential on 01206 282962. Free to EBG members. Numbers limited.

Saturday 24th September, 6-8pm. Fingringhoe Wick Family Nocturnal Nature Walks, Fingringhoe Nature Reserve. Booking essential on 01206 729678. £5 donation.

Friday 30th September 7.30-9.30pm. Bedfords Park Visitor Centre, near Romford. Family Bat Evening. Booking essential on 01708 748646. £5 donation per adult.

Monday 3rd October. Weald Country Park Bat Survey, Brentwood. thehart@btinternet.com

Friday 2nd December. Essex Bat Group Members' Evening, including a talk on 'Bats of Trinidad'. Boreham Village Hall. All members welcome. Further details in next edition of the newsletter.



EBG Committee News

Affiliated to
Bat Conservation Trust



We are pleased to welcome Kim Wallis on to the Committee. Kim works as a Conservation Adviser for Essex & Suffolk Water and is involved in the raising of Abberton Reservoir.

At May's Committee meeting, Pat was elected as Chair and Robin as Vice Chair. This is the first time we have had a full time Chair for some years, with Neil Harvey chairing Committee meetings and AGMs (as Acting Chairman) for much of the interim. Our new Chair will take on responsibility for making sure the group moves forward in the direction decided by the Committee, and will be assisted in this by the new post of Vice Chair.

As part of our efforts to improve the group's effectiveness, the Committee also decided to draw up an action plan and to create a post of Projects Officer (more on this in future editions). The action plan will catalogue the group's activities, identify targets in terms of existing and potential new activities and set out the means for achieving them.

Committee members and other contacts

Committee Members

Sue Burton **Committee Member** 01277 356191 Remusoffice@aol.com

Robin Cottrill **Vice Chair/Minutes Secretary** 01206 826418 robin.cottrill@googlemail.com

Rebecca Gibson **Programme Secretary** beckyg@essexwt.org.uk

Pat Hatch **Chair/Newsletter Editor** 01206 824115 pathatch@live.co.uk

Roger & Sylvia Jiggins **Joint Secretaries** 01376 324311 r.jiggins@btconnect.com

Peggie King **Treasurer** 01268 281478 stephen717king@btinternet.com

Helen Miller **Membership Secretary** 07736 932816 hmiller@bats.org.uk

Kim Wallis **Committee Member** kim.wallis@hotmail.com

Other contacts

Recorder/Roost Counting Group Peter Lane 01376 343567 p.lane@talktalk.net

Webmaster Keith Rawlings 01376 329279 keith@recelectronics.demon.co.uk

Car Survey Ralph Cordey 01245 225889 ralph@cordey.fsnet.co.uk

Bat Care Network Jan Ragg 01279 418393; (Mobile) 07734 265571 jan.ragg@talk21.com

EBG Clothing Order Form

<u>Item</u>	<u>Size</u>	<u>Cost</u> per item	<u>Number</u> per item	<u>Total</u>
Sweat Shirt	S/M/L/XL/XXL	£15		
Polo Shirt	S/M/L/XL/XXL	£15		
Fleece	S/M/L/XL/XXL	£25		
Gillet	S/M/L/XL/XXL	£20		
Subtotal				£ _____
P&P (£2.35 per item)				£ _____
Donation				£ _____
Total				£ _____



- [] I enclose cheque made payable to EBG for the sum of £ _____
 [] I would like my clothing sent to me and have enclosed p&p.
 [] I will collect my item from Hornchurch / Harlow / Ingatestone

Name _____ Address _____
 Email _____ Telephone _____

Please enclose a cheque made payable to EBG for the total amount. please allow 3-4 weeks for delivery.
 If you can collect your clothing from Harlow, Hornchurch or Ingatestone then please do not add the postage.
 Return form to Sue Burton. 2 Mellish Way. Hornchurch. Essex. RM11 2GU.

Membership Form

You can use this form to renew your membership or recruit a friend

We are indebted to our members for their support and enthusiasm. If you would like to help your local bats, please fill in the form and send it to: Helen Miller, EBG Membership Secretary, 16 Hogarth Ave, Brentwood, Essex CM15 8BE

Yes, I would love to become a member of the E.B.G. for 2011/12/13 (*delete as appropriate*)

Name _____ Address _____
 Email _____ Telephone _____

*Using email means we can send your newsletter and other correspondence electronically, saving on postage and stationery so more of your membership money is used for bat conservation. Your email address will not be passed on to any other organisation or used for any other purpose

How did you hear about EBG? (internet, local bat walk, EWT, friend etc): _____

Please tick the appropriate box:

___ Standard membership of the group is just £5 for 1 year

___ OR a *SPECIAL OFFER* of £12 for 3 years

DONATION: I would also like to make a donation of £ _____

I enclose a cheque for £ _____ (made payable to Essex Bat Group)

Your first year's membership will run until December 31st 2011.