

Newsletter Summer 2012

Dengie Peninsula Bat Survey

Tim & Sarah Sapsford with a progress report on a new local bat project

Introduction and objectives This is the first part of a larger bat survey of the Dengie peninsula that is being undertaken to learn more about bat distribution and quality of habitat for this area. The quality of the coast in terms of habitat for birds is well known. The Bradwell shell bank and Blue House Farm are two excellent examples.



Mundon Dead Oaks Bat Transect

However, away from the coast things are less clear. The Dengie peninsula is a relatively flat land mass that is characterised by mainly arable farmland, and it has been this way for many centuries. Bats are known to prefer woodland, water margins and linear corridor habitats. Woodland and water margins exist as very small fragments dispersed widely over the peninsula but linear corridors are in abundance.

The object of the survey is to map the frequency index of bat species and to identify the number of species present and their distribution.

Method The survey locality is approx 220km² (the complete boundary has not been defined as some coastal grid squares will not be used due to the skewing affect they may have on the data). At present a Magenta Bat 4 heterodyne detector is being used for the identification of bat calls. It is proposed that a time expansion or frequency division detector be purchased for the recording and analysing of the bat calls to aid in the accurate identification of species. At present all data is being recorded in a field note book and transferred to Excel. This will later be put into MapMate for easier record distribution and the purchase of an electronic tablet in August by the authors will enable the data to be recorded more efficiently and uploaded to the internet for Essex Bat Group members to follow, either through the EBG Facebook page, Twitter or the authors' own blog. It was felt that social media and the use of up to date technologies are important communication methods in modern conservation and in engaging with the public and others.

Results So far 108 individual bat records have been made over a ten night period, from 4th June - 13th July 2012, revealing a good distribution of bats in the areas surveyed. Eight different transects have been surveyed, covering a wide area of the Dengie peninsula, including Latchingdon, Mundon, Althorne and Creeksea.

My First Trip on the Bat Ambulance

Lucy Robson learns to expect the unexpected on a mercy dash to Clacton

When the phone rings on a Sunday evening, I'm never entirely sure whether to answer, but this time I did and on the other end to my surprise was Jan from the Bat Care Network asking me whether I'd mind taking a trip out to Clacton to collect an injured bat. Now I've never rescued a bat before but with a little reassurance from Jan, I realised the biggest problem was going to be actually finding the address in Clacton. So armed with my trusty shoe box, duster and a bottle cap I set off on my mission.

Twenty minutes later I found myself in the depths of Clacton being welcomed through the door of a block of flats and being shown a slightly blurry photo of the bat in question. "Well, yes, it's brown, kind of bat shaped so it could possibly be a bat. Ok, would you like to show me where it is then?" I found myself saying and was pointed to a biscuit tin on the floor.

Shoe box at the ready, I carefully lifted the tin to find a bottle cap of water and some kitchen towel. Ok, that was a fairly promising start as she'd obviously listened to what she'd been told by the helpline. I gingerly lifted the towel wondering what I'd find, bearing in mind at this point I was expecting a potentially injured or even dead bat and, nothing. There was nothing there. I looked back at the lady who assured me there was definitely a bat before. The only place left to look was inside the tin itself so I gently tipped it back and found myself staring at, not the bat expected but a large and fairly lively Poplar Hawk Moth.

From the way she stepped back, I think the presence of the moth freaked her out more than if it actually had been a bat. Still I reassured her that it was probably just sheltering from the wet weather and that I'd release it for her and no, she hadn't wasted my time at all.



(Photo: Lucy Robson)

She was so apologetic for calling us but also incredibly grateful that we'd taken the time to come out and help. Once I'd thanked her again for calling I scooped up her moth and left her to the rest of her evening. I found a local tree and set my rogue bat free but not before securing it's mug shot for our records.

So, my first bat ambulance experience is done and dusted. My shoe box remains packed and ready just in case and perhaps if there is a next time, I might even find a bat!

A message of thanks to Pat King

The bat care team would like to extend a special thank you to Pat King, who has recently retired from bat care having spent many years collecting bats and caring for them. Thank you Pat, for all your hard work and effort. You will be greatly missed.



(Photo: Geoff Ragg)

Site assessments

Essex Bat Group receives occasional requests to visit various sites and advise on enhancing them for bats.

Linford Wood is a nature reserve near Stanford-le-Hope in Thurrock. What I particularly liked about this site was its scrubby woodland edge (see photo) and the gradation from woodland to scrub to long, rough grassland, giving a



Linford Wood (Photo: Pat Hatch)

diversity of foraging habitats which is added to by the presence of damp areas and a woodland pond. The wood itself has a good structure, with open areas and an extensive understorey, plus a reasonable level of bat roost potential. The warden, who recently joined EBG, has recorded noctules foraging over the grassland area and pipistrelles in the wood. Local bat group members have volunteered to help him with more surveys.

A few of us went on a trip to Clacton-on-Sea at the invitation of Lake View Angling Club, whose Secretary has also joined EBG recently. We met with several enthusiastic members of the club,



The lake (Photo: Pat Hatch)

who were eager to find out more about their bats and bats in general. We were able to confirm the presence of both common and soprano pipistrelles and to advise on the positioning of bat boxes. Surrounded by housing, this site also offers some good foraging habitat - the lake fringed with wetland vegetation and surrounded by scrub and trees, including sheltered locations where branches overhang the water's edge - just the kind of place where flying insects and foraging bats like to congregate.

The effect of recent poor weather

You won't need me to tell you that the weather has been awful for most of this year so far. After a mild winter, the spring saw low temperatures and a drought, followed by a prolonged period of high rainfall, all of which has badly affected many forms of wildlife, not least bats. One bad year, in which maternity roosts are abandoned and many of that year's young bats do not survive, is not necessarily a complete catastrophe in terms of the long term health of bat populations, as long as the adults survive to breed again the following year. But a succession of poor years may presumably have more serious consequences, and this is what we have experienced over the last few years.

Last summer and autumn saw a large number of starving adult bats taken into care and this continued in the spring (see Spring 2012 Newsletter), with bats emerging from hibernation in a poor state, only to find limited foraging opportunities in the adverse weather conditions. This situation may well have been exacerbated by the mild winter, which may have prevented full hibernation and depleted fat reserves.

This year nearly 20% of 134 bat casualties (up to 22nd July) have been starving adults, and now the anticipated influx of juveniles from abandoned maternity roosts has begun. Over 45% of this year's casualties have been juveniles. While long term population trends are difficult to determine with any certainty, we should all hope for a better year in 2013.

Get Involved! Bat activities in Essex

Essex Bat Group members organize a range of activities in Essex, as listed below. More information can be obtained from the contacts named. To help you identify the projects suited to your experience level we have indicated the starting levels required as *Complete beginner*, *Some experience with bat detector*, *More advanced bat detector user*.

Bat Care and Bat Ambulance *Complete beginner*

People find many injured, sick or starving bats. Our Bat Care volunteers will take these in and care for them, wherever possible culminating in eventual release. The work involves people collecting and transporting the bats (Bat Ambulance Drivers) as well as volunteers to help look after them (Bat Carers). The work benefits individual bats but also provides a lot of information on roost locations etc and is an important opportunity to educate the public about bats.

Contact: Jan Ragg (jan.ragg.t21@btinternet.com) or Sue Burton (remusoffice@aol.com).

Bats and Roadside Mammals Survey *Complete beginner*

A regular survey organized nationally by the Bat Conservation Trust and locally by our own organizer. The survey involves driving a transect route of about 20 miles while automatically recording bats using a time expansion detector linked to a digital recorder. This can provide authenticated bat records from areas which may be remote or poorly known.

Contact: Ralph Cordey (ralph@cordey.fsnet.co.uk).

Bat Walks

We have an annual programme of bat walks which are open to the public. These are listed in the newsletter and web site. If you are new to bats why not come along to a bat walk and see these amazing mammals in flight? Many are free to EBG members.

Complete beginner

Contact Becky Gibson (beckyg@essexwt.org.uk) and see page 5.

Running a bat walk as a leader is a rewarding experience, requiring mainly an enthusiasm for the subject and a willingness to share your enthusiasm. Anyone interested in doing this can be supported by training through the Bat Conservation Trust.

Some experience with bat detector

Contact: Becky Gibson (beckyg@essexwt.org.uk).

Churchyard Survey *Complete beginner*

Churchyards and their grounds have a long history with British bats. This is a survey intended to collect information about bats that are using churchyard sites. It involves one or more visits to local churchyards and needs only minimal experience or skill, though the more knowledge you have the more you can contribute.

Contact: Robin Cottrill (robin.cottrill@gmail.com) or Sue Burton (remusoffice@aol.com)

Local Bat Surveys *Complete beginner*

A range of one-off or repeated surveys of specific sites is run every year and volunteers are welcome to attend.

Contact: Pat Hatch (pathatch@live.co.uk)

South Weald Country Park Survey *Some experience with bat detector*

A regular monthly survey of this excellent bat site at Brentwood. It provides opportunities for new recruits to bat detection, as well as old hands, to find out more about the species present and their use of the site.

Contact: Graham Hart (thehart@btinternet.com)

BCT NATIONAL BAT MONITORING PROGRAMME

In addition, there are national surveys organized by the Bat Conservation Trust in which volunteers living in Essex can participate. Details of all of these can be obtained from the BCT.

Field Survey *More advanced bat detector user*

Surveying a site allocated by BCT on two evenings in July for Common and Soprano Pipistrelle, Noctule and Serotine bats. Calls for some knowledge of bat detector techniques.

Waterway Survey *More advanced bat detector user*

Surveying a one kilometre stretch of waterway or lakeside for Daubenton's bats on two evenings in August. Requires surveyor to be able to positively identify Daubenton's bats.

Roost Monitoring *Some experience with bat detector*

Counts of bats leaving or entering known roosts in June.

Nathusius' Pipistrelle Survey *More advanced bat detector user*

Checking a lake or reservoir site allocated by BCT for this migrant species in September.

And finally, why not start your own project? Whether you want to survey a whole district or your local park, river, nature reserve, back garden or tree, you do not have to be greatly experienced to start a project. We can provide ideas and any help and advice you might need.

Contact: Graham Hart (thehart@btinternet.com)

Events Programme 2012

Hanningfield EWT Visitor Centre Roost Counts Count the soprano pips as they leave the maternity roost. Fortnightly counts on Wednesdays. Contact Pete Cloughton (pete.cloughton@btinternet.com)

Bat Survey Monday 13th August - Weald Country Park, Brentwood Ideal for those with frequency division and/or time expansion detectors looking to gain more experience in surveying, recording and sound analysis. Contact Graham Hart (thehart@btinternet.com) for details.

Bat Survey Thursday 16th August - Hintlesham Woods, near Ipswich Suffolk Bat Group have kindly invited EBG members to join them for a detector survey of this ancient woodland RSPB reserve. Contact Pat hatch pat hatch@live.co.uk for details of time and place.

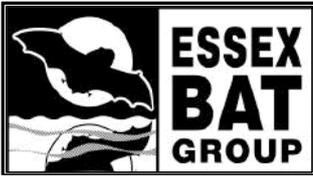
Bat Walk Friday 17th August - High Woods Country Park, Colchester Event in partnership with Colchester Borough Council. 20.00 start. Booking is essential 01206 853588. £3 for adults, children free. EBG members free. Numbers limited. Please confirm meeting place on booking.

Bat Walk Saturday 15th September - Hilly Fields, Colchester Event in partnership with Colchester Borough Council. 19.00 start. Booking is essential 01206 853588. £3 for adults, children and EBG members free. Numbers limited. Please confirm meeting place on booking.

Bat Survey Monday 17th September - Weald Country Park, Brentwood See above,

Bat Walk Saturday 22nd September - Colchester Castle Park Event in partnership with Colchester Borough Council. 18.40 start. Booking is essential 01206 282962. £4 for adults, children free. EBG members free. Numbers limited. Meet at the café in the park.

Bat Survey Monday 8th October - Weald Country Park, Brentwood See above,



Committee members and other contacts



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EBG Clothing Essex Bat Group clothing is now available, featuring our evocative emblem of a bat flying over moonlit water

Sweat Shirt	£16
Polo Shirt	£15
T-shirt	£12
Fleece	£25
Gillet	£20
Cap	£9

Please send your order to Sue Burton, 2 Mellish Way, Hornchurch, Essex RM11 2GU, enclosing a cheque made payable to EBG for the total amount, including £2.35 per item post and packaging. Please allow 3-4 weeks for delivery. If you can collect your clothing from Harlow, Hornchurch or Ingatestone please let Sue know and omit the postage charge.

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 to: Helen Miller, EBG Membership Secretary, 16 Hogarth Ave, Brentwood, Essex CM15 8BE

Yes, I would love to become a member of E.B.G. for 2012*, 2013, 2014 (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 31st December 2012.