

# Newsletter Spring 2016

## Woodland Project Report

Following a well attended introductory talk on our new project, work has got underway with the deployment of static detectors at several sites. The project has attracted a considerable amount of interest from other organizations, including owners and managers of woodland sites and we are pleased to report that we already have the co-operation and support of the



Thorndon Country Park, Brentwood National Trust, the Woodland Trust, Essex Wildlife Trust, the RSPB, Essex County Council, Thurrock Council, Basildon Council, Marks Hall Estate and Castle Point Wildlife Group. Funding from Essex Recorders' partnership has enabled us to purchase four BatLogger A+ static detectors and a Peersonic hand-held full spectrum detector for use by the Weald Bat Project.

We have started the survey by deploying our new detectors in pairs at several woods in the main survey area for the initial phase of the project - the south and east of the county, from where we have no confirmed recent records of barbastelle. While looking for suitable deployment sites at the National Trust's Blakes Wood, Graham Hart managed to record barbastelle, the first record we know of for this species from the Danbury area. Additional deployments will cover the north west of the county, aiming to fill in the gaps in the known distribution of this scarce species in the Uttlesford and Braintree districts.

In addition to static and hand-held detector surveys, we are encouraging members to go out and assess accessible woodlands as bat habitat and look for potential bat roost features in trees. If you can find the time to visit a wood and record what you see, please let us know by contacting Pat at [woodlandbats@essexbatgroup.org](mailto:woodlandbats@essexbatgroup.org). The kind of features that would be worth noting include the presence of an understorey of shrubs below the tree canopy, woodland rides and paths, clearings, standing dead trees, fallen deadwood, ponds, streams and wet ditches.

Any potential roost features would be of interest, but some are more easily identified as having real potential from ground level. Happily, these include features that are typically used by barbastelle, notably loose or lifting bark and long narrow splits. Looking for these two features alone would be of great value to the project. Dead oak trees and dead parts of oak trees often have some areas of loose bark where the dead wood of a limb or stem has shrunk, thus leaving a sheltered void protected by a thick layer of corky bark. Longitudinal splits or 'hazard beams' (see photo), typically in the branches of oak, are also favoured by barbastelle. If the interest is there, we will run workshops on assessing woodland habitat and finding potential roost features in trees, so do let us know if you are interested.



**Deadline for next issue, Summer 2016: 15<sup>th</sup> August 2016.** [pathatch@live.co.uk](mailto:pathatch@live.co.uk)

# Down the Deneholes

**John Hunt** gets subterranean in underground Thurrock

Earlier this year I was fortunate to be invited on one of the annual surveys of the Deneholes under Hangman's Wood in Grays. The Deneholes are medieval chalk pits that consist of a number of central shafts surrounded by a number of chambers. Though long since abandoned for their primary use they now provide an excellent hibernation spot for our local bats! Our intrepid group started by making the 30m decent into the Deneholes (I had



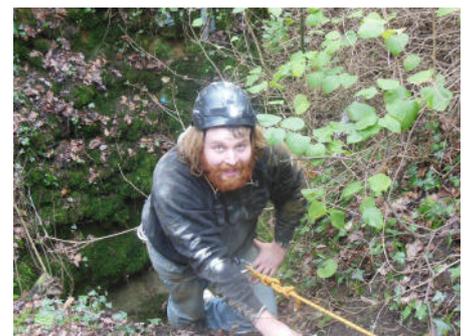
Abseiling Shaft 3

expected a 30ft decent - important to take note of units of measurement when reading e-mails!). I was first down and was immediately amazed by the number of bats on the walls, before my eyes adjusted to the light and I realised that I was in fact looking at bits of flint!

Once the rest of the group had abseiled in, we soon set about making our way through the maze of chambers checking each for bats and identifying the species as best we could. I say as best we could because some of the bats were hidden so well in the cracks of the chamber walls that only a small portion of their body was visible and was not enough to be able to tell for certain which species it was!

Navigating the maze of chambers wasn't too hard as we had a map of the area and most of the tunnels you could walk though standing up. However, some of the chambers were only accessible through smaller tunnels that did require a bit of a crawl on your hands and knees, and probably wouldn't be much fun for anyone with claustrophobia! Navigation was also aided by a number of man-made objects that had been lost down the holes, such as a child's toy car, as well as little cairns constructed from some of the rocks in the caves. These made good points of reference to avoid getting turned around! In fact the only time we had any problems was after crawling through one of the longer tunnels we came to a chamber that was supposed to connect to another but had evidently been filled in at some point so we had to loop around. Once we had covered about half the cave system and we were all confident that we could accurately identify the bat species (it was mainly determining whether a bat was a Daubenton's or a Natterer's) we split into two teams to finish off the last chambers. It didn't take long for us to complete our task and meet up back at the entry shaft. All that was left was to make our escape! This was when I really wished I had read my e-mail a bit more closely in regards to units so I could have been more prepared for the long climb! That said we all made it out (with considerable huffing and puffing) and re-grouped to count up our bat numbers. All in all we found 62 bats comprising of 31 Daubenton's, 29 Natterer's and 2 Brown Long-eareds.

In closing, I would thoroughly recommend this experience to anyone. It is a unique insight into the world of bats and despite the long climb (it wasn't that bad really!) an utterly enjoyable little adventure! If you are fortunate enough to be given the chance to have a go, all I can say is you must go for it!



John emerges after the survey

# East of England Bat Conference

Publicity Officer **Ella Barnett**  
reports on the regional get together

On a rainy Saturday in April hundreds of bat lovers gathered at the University of East Anglia in Norfolk for the East of England Bat Conference, hosted by the Bat Conservation Trust. The day consisted of a series of talks, reports from local bat groups and workshops.

The talks included the long-term monitoring of bat boxes in Thetford Forest Park, where findings suggest that brown long-eared bats use bird boxes for maternity roosts, whereas pipistrelles and noctules seemed to use them during the mating season; Bedfordshire Bat Map, as discussed at our AGM talk in March, in which several bat groups came together to intensively trap and survey a Bedfordshire woodland; Barbastelles in North Norfolk, a project undertaken by The Norfolk Barbastelle Study Group, which involved the tagging and tracking of female barbastelles to find out more about roost requirements, roosting behaviour, foraging habitats and home ranges. And last but not least, the management of bats in churches, where a pilot study is researching and developing management techniques to enable the small number of churches which are severely affected by bats to implement measures to protect heritage in ways which cause no long-term detrimental impacts on the local bat populations.

In the church study, it was found that lights acted as a deterrent to Natterer's bats and could be used to exclude them from sensitive areas. This species is very loyal to church roosts during the maternity season. Soprano pipistrelles which were excluded from a house all formed new roosts within three days. The full project and reports are available on the Defra and Historic England web sites. This study concentrated on the use of light but further work could be carried out to look at whether acoustic deterrents could be used.

Another interesting revelation was the use of an agricultural poly-tunnel as a flight cage - at approximately £200 this seems like an affordable solution.

Various workshops were attended by members of Essex Bat Group, including a fascinating talk on the science of echo-location. We are hoping that some EBG members will also be able to attend the South East England Bat Conference in November.

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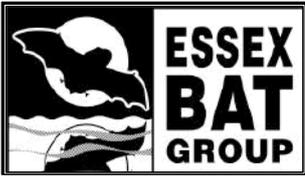
## Nathusius

### news

### in brief

• Due to a delay in obtaining the national Nathusius' pipistrelle project licence from Natural England, this year's trapping sessions did not get underway until late May. However, our only session prior to the usual break over the maternity period was a great success, with three caught and ringed at Hanningfield Reservoir. We failed to identify any Nathusius among the sopranos emerging from the visitor centre and bat box but we suspect they may well be present, so our efforts will continue.

• A Nathusius' pip also came into our hands by a more unusual route when a male was found on the boat landing platform of a wind turbine in an offshore wind farm about six miles east of Clacton. The bat was a little on the light side and was taken into care to be fed up to a healthier weight prior to release. The bat was probably on migration to northern Europe and the fact that it was found on an offshore wind turbine, which are probably a threat to migrating bats, is certainly significant....



## Committee members and other contacts

Bat Conservation Trust  
Partner Group



### EBG Committee

**Ella Barnett**, Publicity Officer & Minutes Secretary [ellabarnett06@gmail.com](mailto:ellabarnett06@gmail.com)

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### Other Contacts

Bat Care Network (to report a grounded bat): See EBG web site for contact phone numbers.

Bat Care Network (general enquiries): Steve Donovan [coppeliusd@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:coppeliusd@yahoo.co.uk) or Kim Wallis [kimrwallis@hotmail.com](mailto:kimrwallis@hotmail.com)

# Membership Form

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

Send to: Helen Miller, 176 Abbotsbury Road, Morden, SM4 5JS

Name

Address

Email

Telephone

Using e-mail means we can send your newsletter and other correspondence electronically. Your e-mail 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 as appropriate:*

Standard membership of the group is just £5 for one year

or £12 for 3 years

Group / organization membership is available for a minimum of £30 a year

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 31<sup>st</sup> December 2016.