HAMPSHIRE BAT GROUP

BAT DROPPINGS

Newsletter of the Hampshire Bat Group

Free to Bat Group members

Autumn 2026

Natter from the Chair

Welcome to the Autumn 2026 edition of Bat Droppings, in which you will find accounts of the wide range of bat activities that we have been engaged in over the summer.

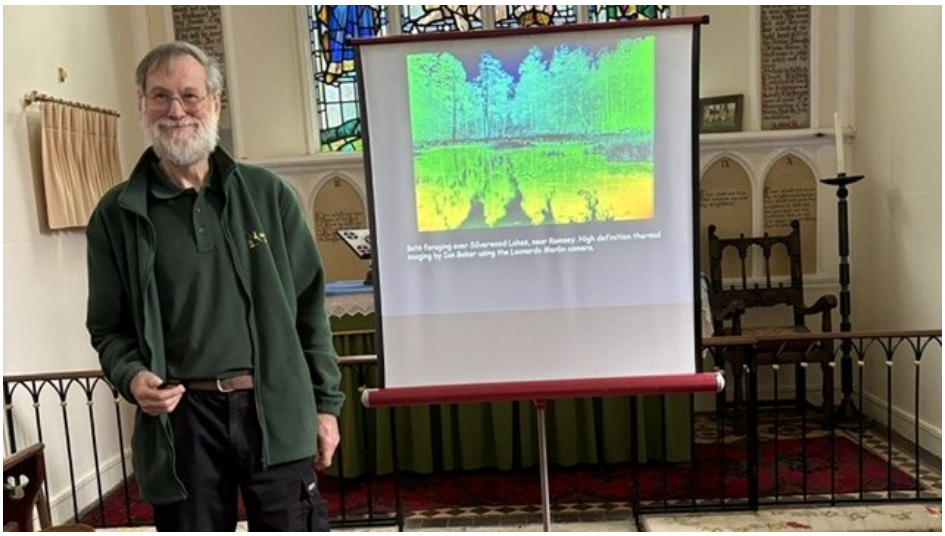
For me, the most exciting project has been the opportunity to take a small part in the radio tracking of the serotines that I have been monitoring for many years at a National Bat Monitoring Programme maternity roost site. Professor Fiona Mathews and her team from the University of Sussex fitted novel cellular technology tags to five of these bats at the end of the maternity period and the results were spectacular. Some of the bats travelled far greater distances than we had suspected and several new roosts were discovered.

We have been helping other university researchers with their projects, including with the sharing of our records.

The transfer of our bat distribution records database from the Mapmate software to Recorder 6 has now been completed, thanks to a lot of work by our colleagues at the Hampshire Biodiversity Information Centre. After tuition in the new methods, I have been able to continue our bat data search operation without any interruption and to input new records. Although there is still some catching up to do, we have already reached the amazing total of 72000 records, covering all 17 of the UK's breeding species. Hampshire's bat records all come to me for verification and addition to our database, followed by synchronisation with the databases at HBIC.

This year I was unable to attend the BCT conference in person but tuned in online. There were less Hampshire folk present than in some recent years, which is a shame because these are such pleasant and informative weekends. Robyn Myers was there at the University of Warwick and gives us an account of her experiences on page 19.

Meanwhile, I have worn our smart new HBG branded clothes when giving presentations, such as on a recent occasion at St Denys Church at Old Chilworth.



We have been planning our series of activities for the period to next Spring and these are listed later in this edition of Bat Droppings. Please note that everyone participating in our hibernation surveys in the Privett tunnel will be required by Highways England to have completed confined spaces training. Fortunately brief, cheap confined spaces training courses and acceptable certificates are available online. We will need to send copies of our certificates to Highways England.

Many thanks to all of you who sent me congratulations for my Award in the King's Birthday Honours. The announcement of the award of an MBE was a huge surprise and delight! One of our members secretly nominated me on account of a range of my volunteering activities since 1968. Much of that has been in conservation and education, although my experience in other areas has been acknowledged too. Most of these things would have been impossible without the support and involvement of my wife Gill. I am acutely aware that all we achieve in the bat group is very much a team effort and hope that this Award can raise the profile of bat conservation. There is usually a considerable delay between the announcement and the Investiture, when one actually receives the medal, so I won't be able to show you that yet! There is precedence for this acknowledgment of our conservation efforts. David Goodall, our Chairman from 1996 to 2000, received an MBE for his extensive voluntary conservation work. Mike Pawling, our Chairman from 2000 to 2008, won the Animal Welfare Conservation Award in the International Fund for Animal Welfare's (IFAW) Animal Action Awards in 2005.

Nik Knight

DATES FOR YOUR DIARIES

We are looking forward to our 2026-2027 season on indoor meetings, so please put these dates in your diaries. They are all on Thursday evenings at the Swanwick Lakes Study Centre. Updates will appear on our website from time to time.

Thursday 22nd October 2026. We will hear a series of talks about the exciting things that our members have been doing over the summer. Carole and George Baber will tell us about their bat survey projects at Salisbury Cathedral and their conservation work at Leckford. Simon Bizley will recount the problems and repair work at the Privett tunnel. Robyn Myers will share her experiences as a new bat carer.

Thursday 19th November 2026. This meeting will be titled 'Hinton Ampner: Reimagining a Hampshire Estate'. This will be a group of talks, with a lot about the rich habitats for the diverse bat fauna, presented by Sophie Bradfield, Isabella Radburn and Colleen Hope.

Thursday 25th February 2027. Adrian Bicker will give his advice on how to review bat survey videos. This will be a follow-up to the workshop that he led at the Bat Conservation Trust annual conference.

Thursday 25th March 2027. Speaker to be confirmed

Thursday 22nd April 2027. AGM and speaker, to be confirmed



Swanwick Lakes Study Centre,
Sopwith Way,
Swanwick,
SO31 7AY

New Forest Bat Surveys

The Hampshire Bat Group undertook 10 capture surveys in the Forest this year, targeting areas where we thought we may locate 'new' maternity colonies of Bechstein's or barbastelle bats. We had some great results, confirming previously unknown maternity colonies of Bechstein's at two sites west of Marchwood (4 km apart), a third just west of Beaulieu and possibly a fourth near Minstead. We also confirmed 'new' maternity colonies of barbastelle at the site just west of Beaulieu and a second at Woodgreen (near Godshill).

We radio-tracked a juvenile Bechstein's and a post-lactating female barbastelle bat from two of these sites. This resulted in the location of four Bechstein's tree roosts (c. 30 bats) and four barbastelle tree roosts (again, up to 30 bats). The Bechstein's roosts were all cavities in oak trees, using woodpecker holes; the barbastelle roosts were all in oak trees behind lifted bark.

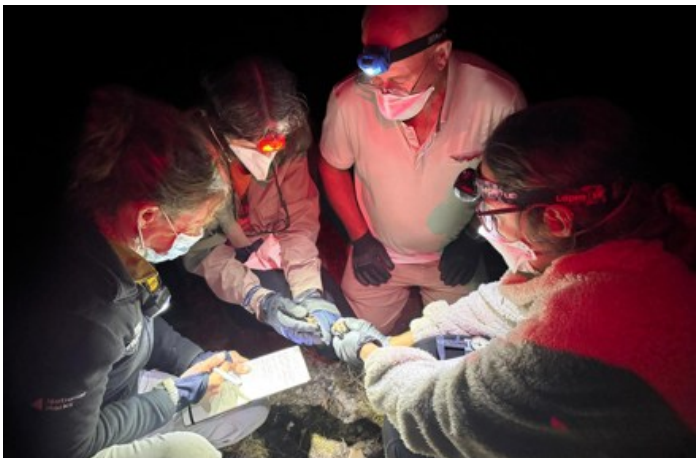


Thermal imaging has proved really useful in locating bats behind lifted bark. The above shows the heat signature (at right) of a colony of 30 barbastelle bats in one of four very similar roost sites used in August this year at Woodgreen. The roosts were found after radio tracking a post lactating female from Godshill (c 2km away) and where we found roosts in 2007. Photo credits C Hope & P Hope

One of the questions we had wanted to answer was whether there was a maternity colony at Godshill. In late May 2007, we had trapped and radio-tracked two female barbastelles at this site in the far northwest of the Forest, but it was early in the maternity season and the roost counts were never more than seven bats. We erected bat boxes and then, in September 2017, found 20 barbastelles in one box. This was too late in the year to confirm the location of a maternity colony (colony roosts can be 4 km apart between June and September).

In 2024 and 2025, the RSPB had captured a number of post-lactating barbastelles 6 km to the east of Godshill at Franchises Wood. They planned to trap and radio-track this year, so we coincided our surveys with theirs and confirmed that these are indeed two separate colonies. So, although Franchises Wood is just into Wiltshire, you could in effect say that a third barbastelle colony was located this year!

Thirteen volunteers assisted with the New Forest trapping and radio-tracking surveys, and we are grateful to both them and the landowners (a mixture of private estates and Forestry England sites). We are also grateful to the New Forest Biodiversity Forum, which provided two grants from its Small Grant Fund to support this work.





At left: Group identification session (photo credit Russell Wynn). At right: filming the emergence of 30 Bechstein's bats using infra red and thermal imaging cameras (Paul Hope and Ian Baker). We also erected a microphone at height close to the roost and recorded calls as bats emerged and returned to the roost over a number of nights at the different roosts (photo credit C Hope)

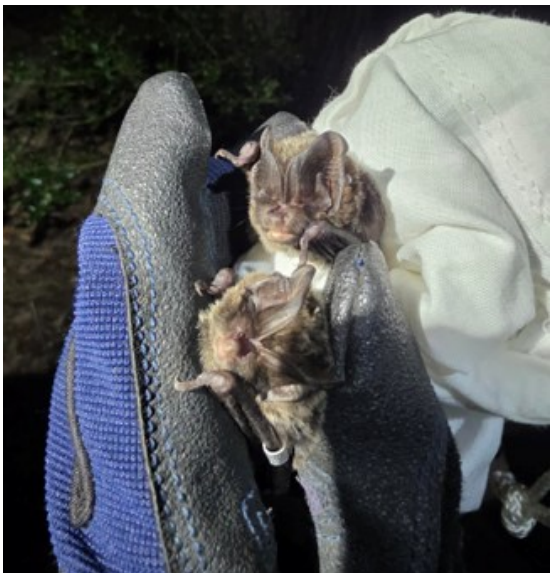
We have also put out pairs of SM2 and SM4 static detectors at four sites in the Forest, as well as in barns at Mottisfont and at the roost at Tatchbury. We are still going through the data but have recorded greater horseshoe passes in one of the barns at Mottisfont and at two of the sites in the New Forest. We also recorded barbastelle at all of the sites; one of these had calls close to sunset and sunrise in a woodland that we will prioritise for trapping and potentially radio-tracking next year.

Late in the summer, we also received a contact from one of the managers of an angling club at Blashford, near Ringwood, who thought he may have bats roosting in an old boathouse. Given the proximity to a greater horseshoe roost, we were of course interested. The boathouse is probably an old wartime structure made of concrete slabs, with numerous gaps between them in the ceiling. The cracks were full of Daubenton's bats, with a maternity roost present and bats remaining late into autumn (and probably hibernating here). At least 171 bats emerged in early September. We erected a harp trap to see if bats returned to swarm later on, but only seven were captured and only one was in breeding condition. It was quite late in the year, and so further investigation is merited next year. We will also undertake at least one hibernation visit.

All of the above was only possible with the valued input of volunteers helping to monitor nets, lug gear, assist with emergence surveys and generally keep up spirits. Some people training for licences have also gained experience in identifying and handling bats. You may have seen some of the incredible thermal imaging and infra-red videos taken by Ian Baker and posted on our Facebook page.



Left: Bechstein's bat (© Russell Wynn)

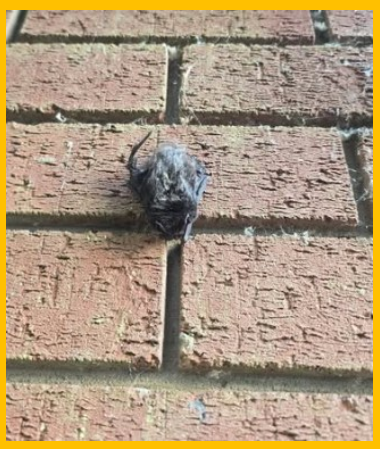


Right: two barbastelle bats (© Colleen Hope)

Colleen Hope

Spotted! Barbastelle in Andover

In early September, a member of the public spotted this barbastelle bat roosting in an exposed position in Andover town centre. The bat hung around for a little while before eventually flying away. Barbastelles are one of our rarer and more elusive bat species, so it was a particularly exciting find.



It is quite unusual to see a bat roosting so openly during daylight hours. Bats will normally choose sheltered, concealed places to rest, where they are protected from the weather and potential predators. A bat sitting out in an exposed position during the day can therefore be vulnerable, and in some cases unusual daytime behaviour may indicate that a bat is injured, exhausted or otherwise in need of help.

Thankfully, this little barbastelle was able to fly away of its own accord.

Kriz Wood

What's in a Name? Bats Through the Ages

We tend to take the word *bat* for granted. Short, simple and unmistakable. But our ancestors had a rather more imaginative collection of names for the animals fluttering around their houses, churches and barns after dark.

One of the loveliest is *flittermouse* or *flutter-mouse.* It comes from Old English and means pretty much what you would expect – a mouse that flitters or flutters. It is also closely related to names that have survived elsewhere in Europe, including the German *Fledermaus* and Dutch *vleermuis*. Then there was the wonderfully strange *reremouse*. This is another very old English name, probably meaning something like a "stirring mouse" or "shaking mouse". It survived for centuries and even crops up in Shakespeare. There were plenty of variations. *Flindermouse* appeared in some regional dialects, while *leather-mouse*, *leather-wing* and *leather-winged mouse* rather neatly described the feature that must have seemed most extraordinary – those thin, leathery wings.

And therein lies a recurring theme. For much of history people struggled slightly with what a bat actually was. Was it a peculiar sort of mouse? Was it a bird? Or was it something somewhere between the two? Hence descriptions such as *flying mouse, winged mouse* and even *night-bird.*



Bats as imagined by a medieval artist, c.1250–60. At a time when bats were known by names such as flittermouse and reremouse, their place among the animals was not always straightforward

Eventually the much shorter word *bat* won out. It appears in Middle English in forms such as *bakke* and gradually displaced many of the older names. Its precise origins are rather less clear than those of some of the wonderfully descriptive words it replaced. Science eventually gave bats another name altogether: Chiroptera, the order to which all bats belong. This comes from Greek words meaning "hand" and "wing" – literally, *hand-wing*. Once you look closely at a bat's wing, with its greatly elongated fingers supporting the membrane, it is probably the most accurate name anyone has given them. So, over the centuries we have gone from reremouse, flittermouse and leather-wing, through to bat and finally chiropteran.

Personally, though, I think we lost something when flittermouse disappeared from everyday use. Next time you see a pipistrelle flickering around the garden at dusk, try calling it a flittermouse. It somehow seems to fit.

George Baber

North Hampshire Bat Box Project - Andover

Earlier this year, several bat boxes located around Andover, near Ladies Walk, were taken down ready to be relocated to Charlton Lakes Nature Reserve, where they will join the existing boxes already in place. It is hoped that concentrating more of the boxes in one area will allow us to carry out more regular box checks, providing greater opportunities to gather useful data on local bat populations. So far, the boxes around Andover have unfortunately produced no records of occupancy by bats, and we are hoping to change this by not only concentrating our existing boxes in areas that can be checked regularly, but also by increasing the number of boxes available.

A generous donation from Stannah, based in Andover, will allow us to add a number of new boxes to the project. These will be installed around Charlton Lakes and Rooksbury Mill Nature Reserve later this year, most likely in November.

Anyone who would like to get involved and help with the box installation event is very welcome to join us. Details of the date and time will be shared through the Hampshire Bat Group WhatsApp chat, so please add yourself to the group if you would like to come along and lend a hand!

Kriz Wood

Summer Bat Displays

Our lovely volunteers generously gave their time and expertise again this year, with an impressive sixteen events completed and two more to come in October.

First was an evening at Queen Elizabeth Country Park for their Dark Skies Festival event, where coffee and cake were provided to exhibitors in the cosy visitor centre. Search for 'South Downs Dark Skies Hub' to see why protecting the darkness and reducing light pollution is important for us and our nocturnal friends.



Queen Elizabeth Country Park



750 finger puppets decorated so far this year!

In March, we attended a local event in Beaulieu, followed by Hampshire Ornithological Society's Members' Day in Winchester. This year, the HOS agenda included an interesting talk by Gill Perkins from the Bumblebee Conservation Trust. UK bumblebees face many challenges, including the effects of climate change, the loss of pollinator-friendly habitats and pesticide use. Did you know that you can buy a summer bumblebee shelter with a small colony (a queen and several workers) for your garden or greenhouse for around £150?

In May, we took the bat stand to Knightwood Primary School in Chandlers Ford. Then came a busy day at the tenth Nature Day at Gilbert White's House in Selborne. Joy kindly brought her pipistrelle care bat for visitors to observe, which generated lots of interesting questions! We also revisited Wicor Primary School in Portchester for their fourth annual Eco Fayre – another busy day helping the children with their bat finger puppets and chatting to the public about all things batty.

In June, we were at the Wild about Nature event at Itchen Valley Country Park, part of the nationwide Great Big Green Week. Then came a Summer Green Fair for students in the grounds of Peter Symonds College in Winchester. The fair's theme focused on simple ways to reduce waste, make more sustainable choices and create a greener future.

In July, we were at the biennial Eco Fair on Petersfield Heath, organised by Petersfield Climate Action Network (PeCAN) and Petersfield Town Council. More than 1,000 visitors enjoyed the entertainment and activities, local food and drink, plus stalls representing fifty organisations, retailers and vendors. At the end of the month, we enjoyed a busy three days at the New Forest Show, which attracts around 85,000 visitors each year.

In August, we spent a lovely hot day at the annual Natural Basingstoke Bioblitz in Beggarwood Park. Enthusiastic visitors went looking for plants, birds, insects, butterflies, bees, trees, fungi and other wildlife, and learned some simple species ID skills with support from the local rangers and wildlife enthusiasts.

A few days later, we were back on the clifftop at Lepe Country Park for their Wildlife Wonders event, with a guided bee walk, bird hide, moth trap identification talk, mini-beast sweep, seashore safari and various crafts and activities for children.

We spent the following weekend at the Hawk Conservancy Trust near Andover for their Big Wild Weekend, along with many other wildlife conservation groups. North East Hampshire Badger Group sold hand-painted plant pots – including a charming long-eared bat made especially for us! Check out their 'Wildlife Artivism to End the Cull' campaign. Wildlife artivism blends art and activism to tell conservation stories, convey complex science through visuals and inspire empathy.



Hawk Conservancy Trust



Hand-painted pot

We attended Hart District Council's popular Nature Discovery Day at Edenbrook Country Park. Then the Romsey Show in September, followed by our second Winchester Green Fair, where we met the cheerful Mayor of Winchester, Councillor Jamie Scott.



Winchester Green Fair

In October, we plan to attend Apple Tasting Day again at Blackmoor Estate near Selborne, followed by the Halloween Steam Up at the Brickworks Museum, just down the road from Swanwick Lakes Nature Reserve. I recently spent an evening at the Museum watching an immersive production of Agatha Christie's play '*And Then There Were None*'. Highly recommended!

Ann Evans

Ewhurst Park Bats

As discussed in our previous newsletter, Ewhurst Park in Tadley contacted Hampshire Bat Group to find out more about the bats using the site. We began organising tree-climbing events to inspect potential roosting features across the park's woodlands. While most features inspected did not contain bats, one HBG member was lucky enough to find a brown long-eared bat in residence! →



A trapping session in August caught mainly soprano pipistrelles, along with one common pipistrelle – an improvement on the earlier survey, when just one Natterer's bat was caught! Through static monitoring, ongoing aerial inspections and further trapping planned for 2027, we hope to build a much clearer picture of the bats using Ewhurst Park and have plenty of data to share in next year's autumn newsletter.

If you are a qualified climber with appropriate insurance and would like to help with aerial inspections at Ewhurst, we would love to hear from you. Further climbing dates are planned for October and November, and possibly December.

Kriz Wood

New Forest Autumn Bat Box Checking

Our enthusiastic group of 8 people, led by Colleen Hope, travelled to 7 of our sites, involving a long day moving from the southeast to the northwest of the New Forest.

80 boxes were checked, with others found to have fallen, been lost or damaged. The results were similar to last autumn.

As usual, some boxes were found to contain bird nests, but two of those also contained bats. There was a notable absence of slugs, consistent with the hot, dry summer. As always, pipistrelles were the most abundant occupants, with a total of 19. Unusually, we only saw a single brown long-eared bat.

The highlight of the day was a male serotine, which we examined and measured. This was in one of our Schwegler 1FF flat boxes at Bramshaw and was the first serotine discovered using our boxes since they were erected in May 2012.

Barbastelle and Natterer's bats had been discovered roosting in our boxes on previous occasions, but none were present this time.

Many thanks to everyone who helped on this occasion: Colleen Hope, Simon Bizley, Nic Pyle, Naomi Addleton, Gemma Uniacke, Ruben Mole, Suzanne Kempe, Rose Proctor and Nik Knight. We continue to be grateful to Forestry England for accommodating our boxes.



Nik Knight



Photo credits: Simon Bizley, Nik Knight

Releasing bats

Carers hope that all bats that come into care will sooner or later be released. Prior to release, their flying skills and weight will have been assessed as suitable. For pups and juveniles, their flying and insect-catching skills, as well as their weight, will have been monitored at Claire's flight cage at Overton, next to the River Test, to ensure they can survive in the wild. The ideal place for release would seem to be close to where the bat was found. However, for some bats this doesn't work. The female Daubenton's that was found in the noodle section of a large supermarket would not have been welcomed back there! She was released 10 miles away, next to one of the Chichester canals, a habitat where Daubenton's are frequently seen.

This year, the weather has been hot and dry. Bats have been found 'grounded', on walls, in rubbish in an alleyway, in a bag at a charity shop, on a kerb and on a patio. Plus, lots of bats have been 'catted'. Some have been underweight and/or dehydrated, suggesting that they have run out of energy and may be at the periphery of the area that they inhabit.

When releasing bats, we check out the area where they were found on a map in advance. We're looking for habitats that would suit the bat being released, with trees and water normally top of the list. Mark drives, and I get the bat into my gloved hand about 10 minutes prior to arrival. They generally start to 'shiver' (blood going to the wing/back muscles) and 'hiccough' (no idea why they do this). Once we arrive, they start wriggling in my hand if they want to be released.

A female whiskered bat (DNA awaited) was found on the end of an industrial building in Fareham. It was close to the M27, an uninspiring section of the River Wallington and a sewage pumping station. When it came to releasing her, we drove and walked around the wider area where she had been found. Despite it being well after sunset, she showed absolutely no interest in being released and we returned home. A few days later, we returned, but this time to the northern side of the M27, further up the River Wallington and close to farm buildings and open countryside. She was keen to head off over the river almost as soon as we arrived. Maybe she needed a bit more hydration and flying practice, but she 'chose' the quieter, darker area with lots of vegetation over the river.

When releasing bats, Mark carries the bat detector, checking for local bats. When two juvenile soprano pipistrelles were returned to be released five weeks after having been found as tiny pups outside a block of flats in Farnham, the bat detector picked up soprano pipistrelles almost as soon as we arrived, and bats could be seen flying overhead.

The juveniles were keen to go and, once released, they all flew around together. It is not possible to say if, or how, they were related, but they were keen to see each other, and the juveniles seemed to know that they were home.

One of the anxieties of releasing bats is releasing one in the wrong place. Two female brown long-eared bats came into care on the same day. One from Basingstoke and the other from Alton. Apart from one being slightly bigger than the other they appeared identical. When releasing the first one in Basingstoke I had 'Alton' in the other hand. We walked to some local woodland and 'Basingstoke' was getting agitated whilst 'Alton' was doing nothing. 'Basingstoke' flew away and 'Alton' was just as excited when she was released close to where she was found in Alton.

Part of the joy of seeing a bat fly away is seeing the excitement of the finder of the bat, and their family and neighbours, seeing it fly away. It is 'their' bat and they are overjoyed that it's 'home' and very grateful for the care that it has received.

Carolyn Hargreaves



A Hampshire Bat Group Engagement!

A little bit of happy news from your newsletter editor! Nathaniel and I first met through the Hampshire Bat Group in 2023 and have since spent many hours together checking bat boxes, climbing trees and getting involved in various bat projects. Somewhere along the way, bats brought us together – and now we're engaged!

It seems only fitting to share the news here, given that without the Hampshire Bat Group, we may never have met.

Kriz Wood

Don't forget: sign up for the car sharing scheme

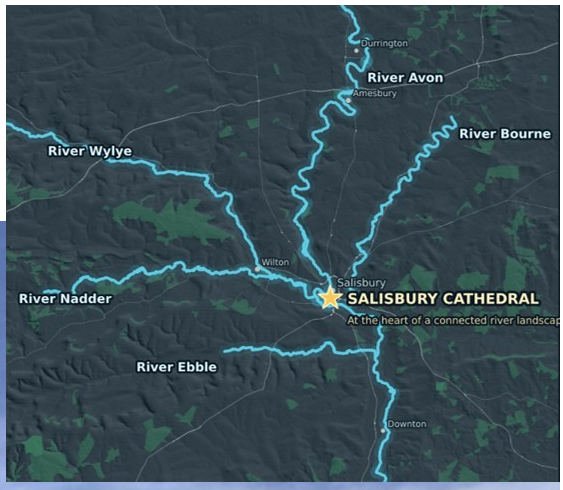
As previously announced, a new HBG car sharing scheme is to be trialled for future HBG meetings. It is hoped that this scheme will reduce the carbon footprint of the group, reduce costs for travel, and enable less mobile members of the group to attend in-person meetings. To date, only six people have joined the scheme.

If you are interested in joining the CSS, then please email Kristina@naturebureau.co.uk with your name, postcode and telephone number - and state whether you are offering a lift, needing a lift (or put your name down for both!)

Bats at Salisbury Cathedral

Over the past few months, we have been carrying out static detector work at Salisbury Cathedral. Our work builds on surveys undertaken by Gareth Harris and members of Wiltshire Bat Group in 2019 and 2021. Salisbury is a particularly interesting place for bats. The city lies where five rivers come together and these provide good ecological connections with the surrounding countryside. The Cathedral Close also has mature trees, grassland, ponds and some relatively dark routes.

The Cathedral itself contains extensive roof spaces, old timbers and plenty of joints and crevices that bats can use.



Salisbury Cathedral and the Five Rivers

Gareth Harris' (Wiltshire Bat Group and Recorder for Wiltshire) first survey in August 2019 included inspections of the roof voids above the nave, north and south transepts and the eastern end of the Cathedral. Bat droppings were collected and sent for DNA analysis.

Five species were confirmed from those samples: common pipistrelle, soprano pipistrelle, brown long-eared bat, serotine and noctule. Further DNA work in 2022 confirmed Brandt's bat, bringing the number of species confirmed through DNA to six.

Detectors were also placed in the roof spaces in 2019. More than 2,000 bat passes were recorded over three nights in the eastern roofs. Most were common and soprano pipistrelles, but brown long-eared and Myotis bats were also recorded. The brown long-eared bats were producing social calls, possibly associated with courtship at that time of year.

Detector walks around the Cathedral grounds recorded at least seven species. Activity was particularly high beside the River Avon, where soprano pipistrelles and Daubenton's bats were feeding. Noctule, Leisler's and serotine were also recorded around the Cathedral Close.

Gareth undertook further detector work in the cloisters during September 2021. A detector placed on the cedar tree in the middle of the cloister garth recorded 20,475 bat passes between 2 and 12 September. A second detector, placed on the wall near the entrance, recorded 32,870 passes between 13 and 20 September. These figures are bat passes and not numbers of bats. An individual bat may pass the detector many times. Even so, the level of activity was much higher than expected.



The Cloisters with the Cedar Trees

There was a great deal of pipistrelle courtship activity. Natterer's, Daubenton's, Whiskered/Brandt's and brown long-eared bats were also recorded, together with social calls. This raised the possibility that the cloisters may be used for autumn swarming. While swarming is more normally associated with caves, mines and tunnels, it can also occur at some large buildings. Bats gather at these sites in late summer and autumn to display and mate. More work would be needed to confirm whether this is happening at the Cathedral, but the amount and type of activity that Gareth recorded make it a real possibility.

Some unexpected species were also recorded. Barbastelles visited the cloisters on several nights and there were records of lesser horseshoe and Nathusius' pipistrelle. Ninety-six greater horseshoe passes were recorded during the second deployment. The pattern of these recordings suggested that a bat may have been using the cloisters as a night roost or feeding perch.

By the end of the 2021 work, 13 species had been recorded at or around the Cathedral. That is a very good species list for any site, particularly one in the centre of a city.

On 2 July 2026, we placed eight static detectors around the Cathedral for eight nights. Six were in different roof spaces and two were in the cloisters. Unfortunately, two detectors failed to record, including those in the nave and eastern chancel roof. This left some obvious gaps, but the successful detectors still produced useful results.

The detector in the western chancel roof recorded 3,883 bat passes. These included 2,871 common pipistrelle passes, 814 soprano pipistrelle passes and 104 noctule passes. Smaller numbers of serotine and brown long-eared bats were also recorded.



Carole and Gary installing an SMMini in the Cloisters

The detector in the cloister corridor recorded 2,850 passes, while the detector beside the cedar tree recorded 1,437. Species recorded in the cloisters included common and soprano pipistrelle, brown long-eared, noctule, serotine, Daubenton's, Natterer's and other Myotis bats. We also recorded a barbastelle in the cloister corridor and possible Leisler's activity near the cedar tree in the centre of the cloister lawn.

The results need to be treated with some caution. The figures show levels of activity and cannot tell us how many individual bats were present. We also used different detector models and recording settings, so the roof-space and cloister totals are not directly comparable.

We have now repeated the static detector survey, including some of the areas where detectors failed or coverage was limited in July. There is a considerable amount of material to work through and the recordings have not yet been processed. If the recordings are usable, they should give us better coverage of some previously under-recorded areas and allow us to compare the two survey periods. Whether they will fill all the gaps depends on detector performance, the quality of the recordings and how active the bats were at the time.

There is clearly still more to learn, but the work already shows that the Cathedral is important for bats. It contains confirmed roosts and supports feeding, social and possibly swarming activity. Together with the cloisters, Cathedral Close and the surrounding river system, it forms a valuable habitat in the centre of Salisbury. This was our first year at Salisbury Cathedral and we were finding our feet in a rather unusual environment - we will plan for next years bat season over the winter.

Carole and George Baber

Abandoned railway tunnel transformed into home for bats

Hidden beneath St Giles Hill is a remarkable piece of Winchester's industrial and railway history: the Chesil Tunnel. The 440-yard-long tunnel is now mainly used by Winchester City Council to store wheelie bins and paving slabs. Contractor visits are infrequent, but lighting has the potential to disturb roosting bats. Fortunately, improved lighting has recently been installed and greater care is taken to ensure lights are not left on.

An old tunnel might be expected to provide plenty of nooks and crannies for bats, but the brickwork remains in remarkably good condition, making it less suitable than one might imagine. In fact, undisturbed piles of paving slabs may offer some of the better places for bats to hide away.

Two years ago, Harry Mycock, Chair of the Friends of St Giles Hill Park, linked up with James Riches of Hampshire Bat Group, and for the last 18 months the tunnel has been monitored for bats, with movements by Myotis species recorded. In February, a hibernation survey was undertaken by Claire Andrews, Simon Bizley, Thomas Ekiert, Samantha Munslow, Harry Mycock, Steve Page, Jim Park, Bailey Riches, James Riches and Veronica Zamora-Gutierrez. Although relatively few bats were found, a Brandt's bat was recorded and DNA analysis of droppings confirmed Natterer's bat.

In May, 10 bat boards and two bat boxes were installed to provide additional roosting opportunities. Simon Bizley, who made the boards, was assisted by Harry Mycock, Bailey Riches, James Riches and Steve Whitmarsh. The drilling required to install them also confirmed just how solidly built the tunnel is!

Funding came mainly from Hampshire Bat Group, with St Giles Hill Residents Association also contributing £100. This support reflects two years of work to raise awareness of the bat hotspot at St Giles Hill Park. Four bat nights and other promotional activities have helped engage local residents, with every bat night producing common pipistrelle, soprano pipistrelle, noctule and serotine bats.

There is a great sense of satisfaction in increasing interest in bats in the east of Winchester and successfully working with Winchester City Council to arrange access for monitoring and surveys – and, perhaps most importantly, gaining permission to drill holes in their property!

Dr Harry Mycock

Reflections from My First National Bat Conference

This year I attended my first National Bat Conference, and I wasn't quite sure what to expect. I came away with considerably more enthusiasm for bats, research and, of course, conference pastries.

One of my highlights came on the very first evening, when we headed out on a bat walk (hosted by Warwickshire Bat Group) with thermal imaging monoculars. I had never used thermal imaging before, so getting to try the newest Pixfra Arc Pro monocular was exciting in itself. Even better, I got to see Daubenton's bats water-gleaning for the first time. Watching them skim across the water through thermal vision was a brilliant introduction to the conference.

The talks gave me plenty to think about too. Dr Orly Razgour presented research into the population-level effects of artificial lighting, including how bats can respond genetically to light. I found this genuinely mind-blowing. I also met someone whose PhD had looked at how bats respond to infrared light, opening up another fascinating area of sensory ecology I hadn't previously considered.

I was pleasantly validated by discovering just how many people use iNaturalist. Seeing it discussed alongside BatSync, developed by Dr Tom August of UKCEH, made me feel that my own enthusiasm for recording wildlife observations is perhaps not entirely without purpose!

Another talk that really caught my attention looked at *Mops plicatus* and its ecosystem services in Southeast Asian rice systems. The scale of the benefit provided by these bats was astonishing: by consuming agricultural pests such as planthoppers, bats can provide an enormous economic benefit to rice farmers.

As a bat carer, I particularly appreciated the dedicated Bat Carer's Coffee Break. I had intended to attend, although I was otherwise occupied chewing off Dr Razgour's ear! Informally chatting to other bat carers throughout the conference was incredibly useful, particularly because there was such a wide range of experience. Perhaps my biggest takeaway was a newfound confidence: meeting people at different stages of their rehabilitation journey, who were experiencing successes and failures remarkably similar to my own, made me realise that I'm not doing as badly as I sometimes think.

There was also a more personal lesson. Those of us who become particularly interested in niche subjects can sometimes feel a little niche ourselves. As an autistic person, I found the conference exciting but occasionally overwhelming. My advice to other neurodivergent attendees would be to take regular breaks, get outside when you need to, consider Loop earplugs or similar, and don't feel pressured to socialise when you're not up to it. The lovely BCT staff certainly never made me feel that socialising was compulsory.

And finally, the pastries, fruit, coffees, sandwiches and desserts deserve an honourable mention. Overall, I came away inspired, slightly overwhelmed, considerably more confident, and already looking forward to the next one. I would like to extend my deepest gratitude to the Bat Conservation Trust for holding such a wonderful event!

Robyn Myers

We hope many of you can join us for our next meeting on 22 October!

As it's our October meeting, we'll be getting into the Halloween spirit – and, as has become tradition, don't forget to bring along some batty-themed snacks to share, (f you're able to.) Whether your contribution is bat-shaped, Halloween-inspired or simply creatively named, we look forward to seeing (and sampling!) what everyone comes up with.

Hampshire Bat Group: The search for a new meeting place continues!

Hampshire Bat Group have been meeting at Swanwick Lakes Study Centre since the 1990's - almost as long as it has existed! However, due to our growing membership and popularity of events, we have now outgrown this venue, and are seeking an alternative venue. If you area aware of any buildings that might be appropriate then please do email Nik Knight at recordshantsbats@gmail.com



In the meantime, our meetings will continue to take place at Swanwick Lakes Study Centre, Sopwith Way, Swanwick, SO31 7AY

The Hampshire Bat Group is registered charity number 1095874 and has no salaried staff. We aim to promote the conservation of bats, including by surveys, rehabilitation and education.

New members are always welcome.

For further information about membership, please email membershiphantsbats@gmail.com

Records should be sent to the County Recorder at recordshantsbats@gmail.com ideally using our record form, which can be downloaded from our website. We also collect bat records from Living Record and iRecord.

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The views expressed in this newsletter are not necessarily the views of the Hampshire Bat Group