

Bat Conservation Trust



Pete Guest Award 2021 Nominations

Background

The Pete Guest Award is given in memory of Pete Guest who was an inspirational figure in the bat conservation movement for more than 20 years. Each year, the bat world is invited to nominate people who have made an outstanding practical contribution to bat conservation. The criteria for the award includes: dedication, innovation, enthusiasm and inspiration in making a difference, both to bats and to people, helping make BCT's vision become a reality.

Previous winners of the award are:

2020. Michelle Young
2019. Gail Armstrong
2018. Steve and Fiona Parker
2017. Donna & Graham Street
2016. James Shipman
2015. Arthur Rivett
2014. Colin Morris
2013. Maggie Brown
2012. Daniel Hargreaves
2011. Peter & Maggie Andrews
2010. Roger Ransome
2009. Sue Swift
2008. Tom McOwat
2007. Phil Burkinshaw
2006. John Haddow
2005. Phil Richardson
2004. Tony Hutson
2003. Jenny Clark*
2002. Shirley Thompson*



* BCT set up an award for "Outstanding voluntary contribution to bat conservation" in 2002, winners received a framed picture. Following Pete's death, the Trustees proposed a new award in Pete's name as a way of honouring his contribution to bat conservation. They also proposed that a formal trophy be sculptured, first awarded in 2004. This then replaced the award set-up in 2002.

This Year's Nominations

A total of **seven** bat workers have been nominated for the Pete Guest Award in 2021 (including two joint nominations):

Name
Tony Atkinson
Roger and Sylvia Jiggins
Nik Knight
Tricia Scott
Helen and Edward Wells

Supporting statements submitted with nominations are enclosed in [appendices 1-5](#).

How to Vote

- Please use the online voting form to register your vote: <https://bit.ly/2QEyoEZ>.
- Votes are limited to one per person. You are only allowed to vote once for one nominee or one pair of joint nominees. Your name and email address will be stored by BCT solely for the purpose of regulating voting and will be deleted after presentation of the award.
- Postal votes will not be accepted as due to remote working we can not guarantee these votes would be counted.

The Decision Process

The nominee(s) with the greatest number of votes will be announced at the Bat Workers Forum on Tuesday 14th September 2021. Due to the Bat Worker's Forum being an online event we are unable to present the award in person and alternative arrangements will be made to deliver the award to the recipient. As well as being announced at the event, the winner of the award will be posted on the BCT website, BCT social media and via email communication to bat groups.

Appendices

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Appendix 1. Supporting statement for Tony Atkinson

Chloe Delgery and Paul Diamond

On behalf of the Cornwall Bat Group

As a relatively new member of the Cornwall Bat Group, having moved down there only a few months before the start of the pandemic, you can imagine that trying to meet fellow members and getting involved with bat group activities was a bit of a challenge. However, I quickly became familiar with one name that kept appearing in bat group communications, whether it was as author of an article, or leader of various surveys: Tony Atkinson. Tony's continuous contributions to our newsletters have been providing the readers with very detailed and captivating accounts of the incredible work he has been carrying out over the years, which were particularly welcome during lockdown. One of my recent favourites was Tony's witty account of his long-term bat box monitoring scheme, and how he had been tinkering with home-made insulated bat boxes there since 2007. Many bat group members have expressed how entertaining and inspiring they have found Tony's articles, as well as the countless surveys he has been leading over the years and continues to lead (safely) despite the pandemic, which is testament to his never-failing enthusiasm and dedication to bat conservation.

Here is one of these accounts, by Paul Diamond, which will demonstrate why Tony is a well-deserving candidate for the Pete Guest Award, and I am delighted to support CBG for his nomination: I've known Tony for over 13 years and surveyed with him on many occasions over this time, his knowledge, commitment and desire to pass on his knowledge is absolutely inspiring. Tony is the 'bat man' for southeast Cornwall and has been a pivotal figure within the Cornwall Bat Group for many, many moons. I understand that Tony has been an ever-present figure on the Cornwall Bat group Committee since the late 1980's. Tony's involvement with bats extends back to the 1950's (around 65 years ago) when he worked with John Hooper to ring greater horseshoe bats ostensibly to monitor their movements and determine whether bats on Dartmoor were the same bats as those in Torbay (which they are) and which co-incidentally revealed that the life span of this species can exceed 30 years.

Tony has been involved in a bat box monitoring scheme for over 25 years, and surveying for the National Bat Monitoring Programme (NBMP) for over 20 years. During the summer months counting horseshoes, brown long-eared, common pips and Daubenton's, and going underground into mines and adits in the somewhat less pleasant months of January and February to count horseshoes and any other bats which turn up from time to time. All of the above require at least two survey visits per season, with some requiring three – this is an incredible level of commitment for anyone, perhaps more so when you realise Tony is 85 years young.

My first underground hibernation survey with Tony was around ten years ago and I distinctly remember Tony apologising to the group in advance as it was likely that being in his 70's Tony would hold us up during the survey as we walked from cars to hibernation sites and back – In fact Tony became the target to keep up with, as he always seemed to be striding out in front!

I also discovered during the day that Tony is so much more than just a 'bat man', he is an all-round naturalist with interests across all of the Natural World, not to mention industrial archaeology as he explained how various features in the landscape were created and how biodiversity had taken over and thrived on some of the neglect.

I would also like to briefly mention Tony's wife Mary. Mary is a remarkable naturalist in her own right, being an exceptional botanist and a top-drawer lepidopterist. In fact, whilst Tony is undertaking bat counts, Mary can often be found just around the corner with her moth trap catching and recording the Lepidoptera in the vicinity too. They are a formidable team who can often be seen holding hands and not just to stop each other falling over!

In addition to Tony's monitoring and recording work, Tony has led innumerable 'bat walks n' talks' over a great many years. He has given presentations on bats and their role within the ecosystem to diverse audiences across the county and acted as trainer and mentor to many aspiring ecologists, myself included. If the above are not sufficient reasons for people to agree that Tony thoroughly deserves the recognition that a Pete Guest award bestows and vote accordingly, I would like to add that Tony is also one of the longest serving Natural England Volunteer Bat Roost Visitor (VBRV) in the County.

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Appendix 2. Supporting statement for Roger and Sylvia Jiggins

Pat Hatch

Essex Bat Group

The Essex Bat Group Committee would like to nominate Roger and Sylvia Jiggins for the Pete Guest Award. Roger and Sylvia have been Joint Secretaries of Essex Bat Group for more than 15 years and involved with both the group and bat conservation in general for even longer. During this time, they have played a significant role in local bat conservation activities, including training new VBRVs, highlighting the importance of Essex churches as bat roosts and inspiring both new members and the general public with their passion for bats and their extensive knowledge.

As licensed Voluntary Bat Roost Visitors, Roger and Sylvia have undertaken countless surveys (probably more than any other Essex VBRV), the majority of which have been to churches. Through these surveys, Roger and Sylvia have developed an incredible amount of knowledge about bats in churches. They are considered to be two of the leading experts on bats and churches in the UK and are particularly adept at designing practical mitigation measures. They dedicate a significant amount of their time to supporting the Chelmsford Diocese and bat conservation by reviewing quinquennial reports and advising on which churches require a VBRV survey for proposed repair and other works. Roger and Sylvia also liaise with architects and contractors to increase awareness of how bats use buildings and the importance of bats and their protection.

Every year, Roger and Sylvia run a church training day for new Bat Conservation Trust helpline staff so that these new staff members who will be giving advice to church wardens etc., have first-hand experience and a greater understanding of how bats use churches. They are also involved in the BCT churches project and have previously run training courses in church surveying.

Roger and Sylvia are also VBRV trainers and have trained the majority of new VBRV's in the county since becoming licensed. They have organised annual VBRV training days, where the county's licence holders come together to share experiences from the past year, and they are always happy to provide advice and support to newly trained VBRVs.

On top of this, Roger and Sylvia undertake bat walks and talks in their local area for members of the public and church congregations, sharing their knowledge and love of bats, increasing the public's understanding of bats and the importance of conservation.

In addition, Sylvia is the Voluntary Warden of Essex Wildlife Trust's Phyllis Currie Nature Reserve in Great Leighs, where she organises work parties to maintain habitats for various species, including of course their beloved bats.

Roger and Sylvia have dedicated many years to working hard to help bats in Essex and across the country. This year, they stood down from the Bat Group Committee, but will continue to support bat conservation through their work with churches and their VBRV role.

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Appendix 3. Supporting statements for Nik Knight

Natalie Boote

Hampshire Bat Group

I met Nik 6 years ago when I moved to Hampshire and he made me feel very welcome to the bat group and introduced me to many activities and people within the bat group. Nik gives up much of his time (between his music concerts and music practice!) for bat conservation and has carried out hundreds of bat walks and talks giving presentations to a wide range of audiences including schools and community groups. As the chair of Hampshire Bat Group for many years he has kept the whole of Hampshire batty by organising us as a committee, carrying out all the admin needed for a charity to continue, carrying out bat data searches for the whole of Hampshire, a large county, carrying out many Volunteer Bat Roost Visits over the years and training new VBRVs with his experience and knowledge of bats. Nik continues to organise and attend events to raise awareness of bats (with a highly organised spreadsheet!) as well as answering queries from members of the public and organisations.

We still find Nik out and about until 4am in the morning helping with bat research in Hampshire such as the Small Myotis Project and the many transects and waterway surveys he carries out for the NBMP projects. I feel very lucky to have met Nik and to be part of the Hampshire Bat Group still running thanks to his great knowledge and kind personality. I think the majority of the bat group will feel he deserves to be recognised for all of the years he has given to raising bat awareness and bat conservation; and also as a way of thanking Nik for keeping the bat group going, for us all to be able to look forward to attending events and talks and meeting up with batty people!

Nicola Pyle

Hampshire Bat Group

I would like to nominate Nik Knight of the Hampshire Bat Group for the Pete Guest award. Nik has been a dedicated member of the Hampshire bat group for over 20 years. During this time he has been an ordinary member, our treasurer and now our chairman and county recorder. He has mentored many of our members, including myself, by taking us on NBMP surveys, VBRV visits, long-term monitoring projects, roost counts, bat care and training on bat sound analysis to name but a few. Nik also organises all of our indoor meetings, inviting an array of interesting speakers, as well as presenting talks himself. I have known Nik for over 14 years, he was one of the first people I got to know when I joined the bat group, making me feel very welcome and has always been supportive.

He always has time for anyone, providing sound advice both to our members and to members of the public through the numerous email enquiries he receives. Nik is always striving to do more and has recently become a VBRV trainer. He also does a tremendous amount of fundraising for us by carrying out hundreds of data searches each year, attending shows and events, as well as co-ordinating all of our events. Nik also finds time to run our website and keep it updated with our latest news and activities, as well as writing articles for our newsletter.

Nik is a real stalwart of our bat group, carrying out a full time job for us. He has shown tremendous dedication and enthusiasm over the years and continues to inspire people of all ages with his regular walks and talks. Nik has gone above and beyond in his commitment to bats and represents all of the values of the Pete Guest award. We're proud to have Nik as our chairman and would like to show our appreciation for all of his dedication and hard work by nominating Nik for the Pete Guest award.

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Appendix 4. Supporting statements for Tricia Scott

Michelle Young

Gloucestershire Bat Group and Evesham Bat Care

As the current holder of the Pete Guest Award, I can think of no person more worthy to pass this to than Tricia Scott. For as long as I've known Tricia, she has been on the committee of Warwickshire Bat Group – mostly as chair and a bat carer. It is her bat carer role that I know Tricia best.

She has always supported the Evesham Bat Care team and we often overlap on calls on the Worcestershire-Warwickshire border so it made sense to involve her early on when she was the only carer in the county. She would cover a huge area up to south Birmingham and including Warwick and Coventry cities. She invested in a private 'bat phone' and most weekends can be found organising calls from everywhere except Warwickshire! She always keeps in touch with the finders of bats and encourages them out on bat walks and to releases where possible. She goes above and beyond to make sure that the finders feel as special as the bat she has in care. In five years, she has had well over 200 bats in care – dedication to a capital D.

She is my right-hand woman, my left-hand assistant, my forefront cheerleader and constant support. She is my go-to midnight phone call, my 'are you free' messages and bestest sounding board. She has cried with me, laughed with me and got covered in paint doing the flight cage works more often than I can remember.

When I had a kitchen full of pups to be hand reared and nearly 30 bats came down a log burning stove I sent her a message that simply asked 'Do you know how to get soot off bats?'. Within an hour, she was at my house, telling me to put the kettle on and get a nap in before the next pup feed. She cleaned all the bats, set up a production line for the critters and magically made everything better. Even when she broke her wrist one winter, she was still trying to think of ways to stay on call to help the group out.

She was the driving force behind setting up Warwickshire Bat Carers and then training and supporting a new gang to cover the bits of the county that we couldn't. She is always available for chats and advice regardless of who is trying to get hold of her.

And as if 24/7 bat care wasn't enough, she monitors all the incoming emails for the bat group and deals with the enquiries and requests; either sending people to the BCT website or replying directly. She takes on bat walks all summer often doing more than one a week for NT properties or groups and churches and will often just turn up at EBC walks to help me

out without being asked or begged. Tricia is the epitome of what makes the Pete Guest Award. She is dedicated and enthusiastic and committed to all that is bat-ness. She is MY inspiration - and she actually likes BLE's which in my eyes, makes her unique.

Jon Russ

Warwickshire Bat Group and Ridgeway Ecology

Tricia has been Chairperson of Warwickshire Bat Group since 2013 but a member for quite a bit longer than that, maybe since at least 2006. It would take me a good while to compile a list of all the walks and talk over this time but it's certainly many dozens. In some ways we wouldn't have a bat group without Tricia, and she does an awful lot to keep it going! Tricia is the beating heart of the bat group and without her dedication, enthusiasm and ability to drive projects forward the group would be a much poorer one. She is involved in, and sometimes leading, all aspects of the group's activities such as the serotine surveys, bat care, bat box checks, National Bat Monitoring counts, sound analysis, fund raising, bat walks and talks, and general surveys.

Claire Dovey

Warwickshire Bat Group

I would agree with Jon that without Tricia, I'm not sure there would be a bat group. The amount Tricia takes on and sets up – the Serotine project, bat box checks, NBMP counts (and I think waterways surveys too!). Tricia is always looking for ways to help the local bat population and generally find out more on what bats are where in the county. But in particular she works hard to get people involved always trying to get people engaged in bat conservation or just getting people interested in their local bats. Since setting up the Serotine project, this has morphed into further studies and a talk which she has freely given to other bat groups.

From a bat care perspective, Tricia is always so willing to share knowledge and mentor people starting out in bat care. She's an oracle of bat care knowledge and won't hesitate to help or be by your side if you have a challenging case. She has often dropped everything to come help me in tricky or unusual situations.

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Appendix 5. Supporting statement for Helen and Edward Wells

Dave Cottle

Somerset Bat Group

Helen and Edward Wells became founder members of the Somerset Bat Group when it was formed in the mid 1980s. Throughout their membership they have contributed a great deal to its continued success and reputation. Both have served on its committee, Helen as Secretary and Edward as Chairman. However, their main role has been as County Recorder for Bats. As a result of this they were among the first to produce a booklet showing the distribution of bats by a county bat group. The booklet, 'The Distribution of Bats in Somerset, Edward & Helen Wells, Somerset Bat Group, 1998', rapidly sold out at the following bat conference. Apart from the maps, it included an account of the history of each species in Somerset. It also highlighted the absence of Leisler's Bat records in the county so Edward promised to give a bottle of wine to anyone who could produce a record. He would not accept a sound recording as these, he knew, were unreliable. Within a few years a grounded Leisler's Bat was taken into care at RSPCA, West Hatch. Fortunately, the current Chair of the Bat Group, Paul Kennedy, was working there and phoned Edward to claim the wine. All the records are sent on to the Somerset Environmental Records Centre and entered on their database, where they are often used to inform planning applications.

Edward, from the beginning of becoming interested in bats, realised the benefit of using bat detectors. He could even separate Common and Soprano Pipistrelle Bats when listening to a Tranquility 2 detector in time expansion mode – according to him it was half a note. The ability to distinguish between the various bat calls was extremely useful on bat walks as most attendees were using heterodyne detectors tuned to one frequency. Without his prompting they would have missed many species. The use of detectors led Helen and Edward to setting up co-ordinated bat surveys in two areas of Somerset and a third cross border one with the Devon Bat Group. The three surveys, in Mendip, the Blackdowns and the Brue Valley, involved organising up to fourteen groups carrying out dusk surveys. It's no small task to arrange the funding, equipment, transects and an assembly venue. Each survey took place over one evening for four or six years. Many volunteers from the local wildlife trusts also took part to assist the bat group members in carrying out the surveys. Once all the groups were safely accounted for Helen and Edward could retire to their motor home before returning to their own home the next day. Then the mammoth task of analysing all the recordings could begin and the reports written and uploaded onto the internet. Other members of the Bat Group, the late Lou Pickersgill and Cath Shellswell, both helped in setting up the project and the analysis.

Before they retired, Helen was a teacher and Edward a solicitor. They have used their professional skills to good effect in the bat group. Many of the members have been helped

and guided by them when they sought help. The bat group's constitution was drawn up by Edward and he gives well thought advice on any issues arising from enquiries to the group. He presents talks and leads bat walks throughout the local area where Helen is often present offering her support. His talks are not confined to bats as he has other interests. One of his talks is about medicinal plants and plants associated with witchcraft. At the end of one talk he gave in Wells, he was approached by a group of ladies who were very interested in the latter subject. When he asked where they were from, they replied, Glastonbury. In the past he was a Council Member of the Bat Conservation Trust and both are regulars at the National Conferences. Since its inception they have submitted annual counts to BCT's National Bat Monitoring Programme. For many years they carried out the duties of volunteer bat roost visitors and only gave up when Edward no longer felt safe entering lofts.

Before joining the bat group, they were already, and still are, members of the Mammal Society. More recently Edward has helped with the formation of the Somerset Mammal Group. Another organisation receiving much of their attention is the Somerset Wildlife Trust. In Edward's case this is not surprising as his own father was a founding Council Member of the Hampshire Wildlife Trust. Edward has a record of over thirty years' service on the Somerset Trust's Council, which is unequalled. In 2015 he wrote another book, 'A History of Somerset Wildlife Trust', which also illustrates how much the Trust has benefitted from his involvement.

Edward is the first to admit that all of this voluntary work, alongside his demanding professional life, would not have been possible without the support he received from Helen. Apart from her interest in mammals, she is an accomplished photographer of flowers. Some of her work appeared in a book, 'Somerset Wild Flowers: A Guide to Their Identification' by Bernard Storer and David Reid. In pursuit of this hobby their motor home has been driven to all quarters of the British Isles and much of France. They have also been to Crete, the subject of another of their talks. When they first joined the Bat Group they were accompanied by their sons, David and Peter. Now grown up, and with their own families, both have careers as ecologists – possibly influenced by their parents' interests. Their sons are not the only people influenced by their parents' enthusiasm for bats, as you only have to listen to the attendees at their bat walks and talks to see it is shared by others. The conclusion to be drawn from their dedicated and productive membership of the Somerset Bat Group for over thirty five years, the detailed recording of the bat distribution in the county and the promotion of bats in a very positive light, is that they would be very worthy winners of the Pete Guest award.

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