
This email has been sent to bat group contacts only.
Please forward this information to others in your group.

Dear bat group member,

Hello and welcome to the March edition of the Bat Group Bulletin! In this issue you can find organisational updates, reminders on COVID-19 best practices, requests for data and opportunities to get involved this season.

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1. Latest on the 4th Edition of the Bat Survey Guidelines. Updates on the Bat Survey Guidelines and IR Bat Survey Guidelines were given at the National and English Regional Bat Conferences in 2022 and the Consultant's Forum in 2023. However, we understand that more communication and regular updates would be welcomed. **We have decided to delay publication of the 4th edition of the guidelines to September 2023** to avoid confusion for consultants and their clients during the busy summer survey period. Please see our website for more information: <http://bit.ly/3Zov1iP>.

2. Updated 'Bats and Artificial Lighting in the UK' Guidance Note. Since 2018, when the [BCT/ILP best practice guidance](#) was released, there has been a considerable amount of new academic and industry research. BCT chair the 'Bats & Artificial Lighting' steering group with representatives from the ILP and industry practitioners which have updated the best practice guidance document. This updated document is now awaiting final edits and steering group sign-off, but was previewed at a recent [technical symposium event](#) on 28th Feb. The event covered the major changes, presented by steering group members, and online content from the day will be produced in due course. Please keep an eye on BCT bulletins and social media for this and the newly updated guidance note GN 08 23 being made public once sign-off has been completed, this expected in April 2023.

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3. COVID-19 / SARS-CoV-2 and Bat Group Activities. Whilst there are no longer legal restrictions for people in relation to COVID-19, it is essential that we continue to take precautions when it comes to bats. The case numbers in humans are increasing in some areas (at the time of writing positive tests were up 11.6% in the last week in England, according to <https://coronavirus.data.gov.uk/>).

The World Organisation for Animal Health continues to report on cases from domestic and wild animals (see <http://bit.ly/42K5Ryd>), and whilst our understanding of the risk of SARS-CoV-2 (the virus that causes COVID-19) to bats is increasing, precautionary action continues to be necessary. The guidance for activities that involve being in close proximity to or handling bats remain as they were last summer. The IUCN Bat Specialist Group (BSG) guidance for bat field work sets out information about how to consider the risk and take appropriate precautions to mitigate for it; including the wearing of face masks and gloves, along with good field.

The IUCN BSG guidance documents for field workers and researchers, bat rehabilitators, cavers, and guano collectors can be found at: <https://bit.ly/3dmmo3j> (there is also an infographic providing a short visual summary of the guidance). Defra guidance 'COVID-19 and interacting with wildlife for the purposes surveying and mitigation works' is on the GOV.UK website: <https://bit.ly/3uExNmP> (note the page heading says the advice has been withdrawn but that was part of the removal of restrictions for people, the guidance relating to interactions with wildlife is still very relevant) and there may well be conditions relating to COVID-19 / SARS-CoV-2 on your bat licence, so please check.

We have been delivering a workshop on 'Biosecurity and bats: effective disease risk management' online and at various conferences over the last year. If there is sufficient interest, we'd be happy to run this as a standalone workshop online again; please email Lisa Worledge: lworledge@bats.org.uk if you are interested in or if you have any questions around biosecurity and bats in relation to SARS-CoV-2 (or other risk areas).

4. COVID-19 / SARS-CoV-2 and Live Bats at Events. As with the field work guidance mentioned above, the guidance for bat rehabilitators remains as it was last year due to the ongoing risks of transmission of SARS-CoV-2 from humans to bats.

Whilst having live bats can really enhance an event, because of this continued risk we can't return to the approach taken pre-pandemic. We've seen good use being made of alternatives since the start of the pandemic, such as videos of natural bat behaviour and live links to bat rehabilitators (in fact we have used the latter on several training courses ourselves). Of course this isn't the same as live bats, these sorts of approaches can still be highly engaging.

If you do wish to take education bats to an event, then the IUCN BSG guidance for bat rehabilitators (available at <https://bit.ly/3dmmo3j>, section 4 'Permanent residents'; there is also an infographic providing a short visual summary of the guidance) advises that permanent captives (i.e. bats that are not going to be released) may be taken to events but they should be kept in enclosed plastic boxes, and the ventilation covered with a facemask or equivalent (e.g. using elastic bands to hold in place).

The bats should not be taken out of their plastic box and handled at the event. Mesh/net containers for bats should not be used at events as they don't offer any protection against aerosol transmission. As always bat welfare should be the paramount consideration. If you have any questions about this please email Lisa Worledge: lworledge@bats.org.uk.

5. Office of Environmental Protection Call for Evidence – Protected sites for nature in England and Northern Ireland. The Office of Environmental Protection (OEP) is inviting interested parties to submit evidence as part of their review of the implementation of laws for the designation and

management of sites protected in England and Northern Ireland. This is for SSSI, SACs and SPAs. The OEP are reviewing how it is being implemented, its effectiveness and, if appropriate, to recommend improvements. Evidence can include views and/or relevant written material. BCT is working with Wildlife and Countryside Link on a response. It would appear this process is open to all 'interested parties' so your bat group may want to take part. You can find more information here: <http://bit.ly/3lloCkY>. The deadline for contributions is **21st April**.

6. Chance to Double your Donation to BCT. BCT has been selected for the BigGive Green Match Fund which means we have an opportunity to double every donation we receive, up to a total of £5,000. That means we could raise at least £10,000 to help bat conservation. The donations must be via the BigGive platform and must be received between 20th–27th April 2023: <http://bit.ly/3nD83XW>.

7. Get Ready for Spring Surveys with the National Bat Monitoring Programme. Bats are starting to come out of hibernation, and we invite you to kickstart your bat surveys by participating in the **Sunset Survey** from April to October. The Sunset Survey is ideal if you don't have previous bat surveying experience. Please find more details here: <https://bit.ly/3OTvuWm>. Also, make sure to complete our Sunset Survey competition!

Do you have a bat roost at or near your house? If you are interested in counting those bats, then help us monitor how different bat species are faring across the UK by taking part in the **Roost Count**. For all species except the horseshoes, count the bats as they emerge from a roost on at least two evenings in June. Lesser horseshoe bat counts start in late May, while greater horseshoe bat counts take place in July. To sign up for Roost Count and more details, please visit: <https://bit.ly/3rYy6lr>.

8. East Lancashire Bat Group. An enthusiastic volunteer is looking to reinvigorate this bat group. They are keen to get the group active again in the local area, undertaking surveys and doing outreach in time. They are currently discussing steps with BCT's Bat Groups Officer and neighbouring groups, with input from past committee members. Whether you are already a member of the group or just looking to get more involved locally, if you can assist Victoria and the bat group, please do email her on [v_huntriss\[at\]yahoo.co.uk](mailto:v_huntriss@yahoo.co.uk) (to email replace [at] with @).

9. British Wildlife Bat Report – Records Wanted! We are compiling the latest of the twice-yearly bat reports for British Wildlife, including a round-up of notable records from the last six months (or longer if there are interesting records that didn't previously get included). Notable records would include vagrants, species discovered outside their typical range, new records of our rarer species, or anything that's a bit unusual or unexpected. Precise locations won't be published unless you feel this is non-sensitive information that is worth including. If you have any records you'd like considered for inclusion in the report please email Philip Briggs at pbriggs@bats.org.uk.

10. Surveying for Bats on Golf Courses. An ambitious project to audit the wildlife utilising golf courses in the UK and Ireland is underway and we'd love to collaborate with local bat groups to help us to record bats across 28 golf courses in 2023. Courses included in the project support a vast array of habitats, from species-rich calcareous grassland to heathland, open water, veteran trees and broadleaved woodland spanning coastal, rural and urban areas. The project commenced in 2022 and has built a baseline which we want to continue adding to and monitoring over time, to see if changes in habitat management influence a change in diversity, and to generally gather more data to understand which species golf courses support. The golf courses involved in the project can be seen here: <http://bit.ly/3TQYtg8>. If anyone is interested in assisting in this project, please do get in touch with Sophie Olejnik at sophie@oleo.design or call 07885735568 to discuss further. There's a hidden world for bats on golf courses, please help us to uncover it!

11. Natural England Introducing Longer Bat Science & Conservation Personal Licences. As part of a range of improvements, Natural England is amending the maximum term for personal licences up to 5 years, instead of 1 year. To provide flexibility and reduce renewal applications. The licence length will be determined by the conservation status of the bat species and the risk to bat welfare. If you wish to apply for a longer-term personal licence, make this clear in your application and in the project plan by including details of each year, along with also providing yearly objectives. For all longer-term licences, interim reports will be required once a year. If you have any questions, please contact wildlife.scicons@naturalengland.org.uk.

12. Bats in Churches – Training Opportunities. We are offering churches the opportunity to attend free workshops on heritage cleaning. While it is primarily targeted towards church volunteers, we want to extend the invitation to bat group members too.

[Sat 15th April](#): St Mary Magdalene, Brampton, Huntingdon

[Fri 28th April](#): Gwennap, St Wenappa, Cornwall

[Sat 3rd June](#): St Margaret of Antioch, Wellington, Herefordshire

[Fri 16th June](#): Grafham church, St Andrew's, Surrey

[Sat 17th June](#): St Nicholas, Newton Blossomville, Buckinghamshire

The team are organising a Volunteer Bat Roost Visitor training event in the South West on 13th May. If you are a VBRV or VBRV trainee interested in attending, please contact awalsh@bats.org.uk. The team are also showcasing a range of case studies of mitigation at a range of project churches at an Ecologists Best Practice Forum on 20th April. It's full steam ahead in our final year. Check out the Bats in Churches web site for resources and details as they are posted: www.batsinchurches.org.uk.

13. Bats Challenge Badge. As part of the Bats in Churches project's ongoing engagement with church communities we've created a Challenge Badge for young people, which will enable them to learn more about and engage with their local church and wildlife. It's also a lovely activity for groups such as Sunday School or youth groups to do together. Young people complete a series of activities, including visiting their local church, hunting for bats, crafts, games and activities, then receive a special badge from Bats in Churches once they have completed their challenges. You can find all the information and resources for the Bats in Churches Challenge Badge here: <http://bit.ly/3JQXVm1>.



14. BCT Fundraising at the Virtual London Marathon. Three wonderful people have taken up the places to run for BCT at the Virtual London Marathon, taking place Sunday 23rd April. You can find them and their fundraising pages here: <https://bit.ly/3BAvzr2>.

15. Help the Helpline this Summer. The **deadline** for applications is the **first weekend in April**. Every year the National Bat Helpline takes thousands of calls from people who have found grounded and injured bats. We are fast approaching the summer, during which our Helpline becomes very busy. To ensure that as many bats as possible are helped during this critical time, a Volunteer Bat Care Helpline (VBCH) is operated from May to September. We need volunteers to answer bat care-related calls during office hours (9.30pm-4.30pm), as well as during the evenings, weekends and bank holidays. Volunteers attend an interactive and informative virtual training day before carrying out 'Bat Watches' from the comfort of their home, receiving full support from BCT staff throughout the project. Volunteering on the VBCH is a very rewarding experience for beginners, experienced bat workers and everyone in between.

To find out more (including training dates) and to sign up, please follow this [link](#). More information about the project can be found on the [BCT website](#). Please note that volunteer positions are available on a first come first served basis. We will end recruitment once all the places on the four training days have been filled. If you have any questions, please email helplinevolunteers@bats.org.uk.

16. Reminder – National Bat Conference 2023. We're pleased to announce that this year's National Bat Conference will be held on **15th-17th September** at the University of Nottingham. Save the date for now or join our mailing list to be the first to hear the latest: <https://bit.ly/3QqJS9H>. The chance to submit an abstract closes soon, on **17th April**: <http://bit.ly/3JPw6ZN>.

17. Key Dates for Your Diary. Watch this space for dates and reminders of conferences, BCT training and other events you may be interested in. Please do utilise the extra publicity for your events by getting them added to the [BCT events page](#). For more information about training please see our [training pages](#) or email the training team on training@bats.org.uk. You can also get updates straight to your inbox by signing up to BCT's events mailing list here: <https://bit.ly/3a2g0M0>.

BCT Events and Training. BCT is now running a hybrid program of online and in-person events.

- **13th & 17th April – Bats for Heritage Professionals.** Online course over two afternoons, technical advice for anyone working with heritage buildings: <http://bit.ly/3dROAxU>.
- **15th April – North of England Bat Conference.** Booking is open for this hybrid event! Check this page for the programme and booking links: <http://bit.ly/3EBlagL>. A meet-up opportunity for current and prospective bat carers will be held from during the second half of lunch. This is a chance for networking and sharing of knowledge between existing carers, and for those curious about bat care to learn a little more about it.
- **3rd May – Caring for baby bats.** Specialised online evening course looking at the challenges and best practice caring for baby bats. Not an introductory course: <https://bit.ly/3TqCQSe>.
- **11th May – Bats for Building Professionals.** One day in-person course to increase awareness of responsibilities with regard to bats: <http://bit.ly/3UMgxrr>.
- **16th May – Discover your local bats.** Free online NBMP workshop: <http://bit.ly/3M0fOkP>.
- **8th-10th August – Advanced bat survey techniques.** In-person course giving theoretical and practical experience of lures, harp traps, mist nets and radio tracking: <http://bit.ly/3gdx1GG>.
- **4th-6th September – Advanced bat survey techniques.** In-person course giving theoretical and practical experience of lures, harp traps, mist nets and radio tracking: <http://bit.ly/3gdx1GG>.
- **15th-17th September – National Bat Conference.** Save the date! This year's National Bat Conference will be held at the University of Nottingham. Sign up to be on the mailing list for news of the conference here: <https://bit.ly/3QqJS9H>. Submit abstracts until 17th April.

Bat Group Events. If your bat group would like to promote an online talk that is open to members of other bat groups, then please email batgroups@bats.org.uk to be included in this section.

- **6th May – Using your ears.** NBMP in-person level 2 workshop lead by members of the North Ceredigion Bat Group. More details in the booking form: <http://bit.ly/3Zknp0Q>

Other Events and Training.

- **5th May – BritBats Symposium.** One day in-person conference presenting academic work, open to anyone. Tickets on sale from 6th March and they are currently accepting abstracts: <https://www.britbats.com/>.

- **Ongoing – Bat Acoustics Analysis.** Online course from BatAbility containing 14 modules and more than 15 hours of content to develop your skills in bat call analysis and, if you want, undertake a graded examination at the end of the course. BatAbility are kindly donating at least 6% to BCT for each participant that signs up. <https://bit.ly/3fvgZHa>.
- **Ongoing – Free Charity and Trustee Webinars.** See gettingonboard.org.

18. Bat Research Papers, Reports & Other Batty Media. Please note we normally include articles, reports and blogs that are available to read online or download without charge.

- **Virtual zoo ‘bat experience’ produces positive change in attitudes.** Comparing responses before and after the bat experience: <http://bit.ly/3JTHZ2u>.
- **Effects of culling vampire bats on the spatial spread and spillover of rabies.** Study showing that reactive culls did not lower the incidence rate of rabies in Peru: <https://bit.ly/42MS21R>.
- **Effects of electricity power lines on bats.** Difference found in avoidance and attraction behaviours mediated by humidity: <https://bit.ly/3ZrH5jx>.

A rolling 12 months of previous bulletins are available on the BCT website at <https://bit.ly/2GGoYRK>.

Best wishes,



Abby Packham
Bat Groups Officer

If you wish to alter your contact preferences, including to opt-out of receiving future communications from us, please contact us by either calling 020 7820 7193 or emailing batgroups@bats.org.uk, **however if you are receiving this bulletin forwarded to you by your bat group, please contact the bat group directly.**