



Bat Group Mingle 1st March 2022

This bat group mingle was held in the evening of Tuesday 1st March 2022, and was hosted by **Central Scotland Bat Group**. The hosting bat group decided on the topics and chaired the discussions in room, they did not provide a talk and all bat groups were encouraged to share experiences and expertise. Abby Packham and Claudia Gebhardt from BCT were on hand to deal with zoom and take notes.

There were 21 attendees from bat groups across England, Scotland and Wales. It was a free event with some choosing to make donations to BCT with their booking. Due to last minute availability changes, it was decided that the evening's topics would be discussed together in the main room. Topics included bat group management, SARS-CoV-2 biosecurity best practice and the National Nathusius Pipistrelle Project (NNPP), which is looking to start on a large scale in Scotland this year.

Bat Group Management

- Discussion started with handling emails. How to make sure you are making the most of your membership. Don't want to miss new members because they don't get moved across to the "emailing system" (mailchimp/google/yahoo etc). Importance of translating new members to active members.
- Some groups use spreadsheets for member database and usual separate mailing system (googlemail) so the two aren't integrated.
- Experience shared of using different facebook groups for different levels of group involvement and contacting members via that, and also a googlemail list.
- Group looking for recommendations on bank accounts that work to make treasurer's/membership officer's life easier. Attendees shared experience of various banks, many use Lloyds, Metro was mentioned.
- Difficulty of banks taking on society accounts. Charges may seem small but some groups only have ~20 people so £5 a month would bankrupt the group.
- Recommendations shared of "challenger banks" i.e. not high street banks. But people mentioned branches are needed on occasion, online only doesn't work for many groups.
- Suggestion from one bat group that they use Paypal, discussion of advantages (such as instant payment emails and quick online access) and disadvantages (such as charges).
- Bonus of standing orders and direct debits, people tend to forget and overpay rather than forget and underpay.
- Conversation moved to renewals, methods and when. When people first join and pay membership they get the remainder of that year and the next year in one for ease of renewal dates. Possibility easier to handle than individual renewal dates.
- Suggestion: once a year if they haven't paid, take off mailing list.
- Some groups didn't ask for subs last year due to inactivity.
- What details to take, for example bad handwriting can lead to incorrect email addresses so perhaps ask for phone numbers as well as these can be easier to read than email addresses.

Biosecurity

- Question posed, how are groups applying the guidance? Reduction in the number at events, some only committee or even two people, so no involvement of membership.
- Some pushing back on protocols such as vaccination, but a small minority, and it is too important so the individual's opinion cannot trump this. One group took a trustee decision that an individual was unable to attend events due to non-compliance.
- Many groups rely on trust, such as negative lateral flows or vaccination status, not asking for proof.
- Concern other organisations aren't aware of the cavers guidance from IUCN. Link shared: <https://www.iucnbsg.org/bsg-publications.html>. Such as those that own these sites.
- Titre tests mentioned, need paying for anywhere apart from Scotland, but agreement that it's better than getting rabies!
- Question posed, in this new environment, what projects are people thinking about undertaking? Bat box making, NBMP surveys. Trying to come up with more activities that don't involve handling bats, eg roost counts, hibernacula repairs. Bat walks and moth trapping can well together for an engagement event.
- Questions regarding transmission, anything new to expect. Tracey Jolliffe mentioned that from a virology point of view, that the human transmission differences in the virus variants don't necessarily correlate with the risk of transmission to bats.

NNPP

- Enquires to Abby Packham regarding the NNPP this year. Abby said whilst project will be going ahead no firm decisions made yet as to how, but it would be good to focus on acoustic work and trapping. Acoustic surveys less risk and more flexible, so there may be more weight on this. Also need to double check if Nathusius' sites activity has changed, due to data gap. Things are still in planning. Certain groups possibly advanced techniques would be appropriate. Backtracking to maternity roost only in a select few groups.
- One group said they plan on sticking to best areas from previous years, maybe think about expanding in future.
- Groups have found some Nathusius' pipistrelle recordings from other acoustic work they have carried out over the last two years so interested to follow this up with trapping.
- Scottish group asking about how English groups got started with the NNPP work, as it is beginning this year in Scotland. Many don't remember exactly. Reference to picking sites based on information in the survey guidelines. Some sites considered so ideal they went straight to trapping without any acoustic work.
- Some groups started broad but quickly narrowed down to hotspot areas, for example along rivers. Rivers echoed by other groups. Inspired others to consider their own rivers and canals.
- Recommendations of cheap AudioMoths for basic quick information, doesn't need to be a whole scheme. Mixture of thoughts on whether they are easy to use or not. Request for AudioMoth workshops and more discussion about it.
- Change in survey guidelines might make consultancies get rid of "old" detectors, good equipment up for grabs. But be wary of ebay for second hand detectors!

The bat group mingle event has a dedicated webpage under the 'resources for bat groups' area of the BCT website, containing details of the next event when available, and previous meetings.