



Swanton Novers Woodland Bat Project Spring Newsletter

Spring 2017

Discovering the connection between natural heritage and cultural influences in Swanton Novers woodland



Welcome to this bumper spring edition of the Swanton Novers Woodland Bat Project Newsletter. The first year of this interesting and rewarding project has flown by and we are now in the second year of the project, gearing up for the survey season. Where has all the time gone? The project now has a dedicated team of 25 volunteers who are continuing to help with bat surveys, call analysis and public engagement.

The static detectors were deployed throughout the winter months and though bats will hibernate during the winter, the detectors have recorded a very small amount of bat activity during the warmer evenings, as some bats have taken the opportunity to feed on the few insects that were flying around.



Woodland and Wildlife Champions Chris and Jamie during a recent transect survey © Sonia Reveley

To date, the static detectors have been deployed 19 times giving the project 380 nights of recordings. 98% of the bat data collected by the project during 2016 is now analysed with help from our amazing group of volunteers. To analyse the data we have been using two call analysis software programs - SonoChiro and BatSound. We are currently manually checking the calls to ensure that the call analysis software we are using is correctly classifying the calls. Once this is checked and confirmed all the outputs will be stored onto an Access database which is accessible and easy to use. Then the fun will begin! We will be able to study the data in detail and tell you more about the data collected from the first year of the project.

As it is the beginning of the survey season the monthly transect surveys have recently started, with the first lot of surveys already carried out by some of our volunteers.

Unfortunately, the weather has been a bit unsettled over the last couple of months and one of the transect surveys scheduled for the 29th of May had to be cancelled as the heavens opened, but we managed to survey the following evening.

We also carried out some trapping at the end of May and we caught 7 bats in total. The species we caught were two Natterer's bats, two barbastelle bats, one common pipistrelle and three brown long-eared bats. We tagged a female Barbastelle bat, as we wanted to locate the tree it was roosting in during the day. This is done by attaching a small radio tag onto the back of a bat, an activity that is carried out by a trained, licenced bat worker. We then used a receiver and antenna to follow the signal emitted by the radio tag. This involves a lot of walking



Woodland and Wildlife Champion Chris during a recent transect survey © Sonia Reveley

around the woodland swinging a large antenna above your head. Once we pick up a signal we then do some triangulation in order to locate where the signal is strongest. Volunteers will be trained to use the radio-tracking equipment and will be shown how to locate the tagged barbastelle bat using the equipment provided. Once the roost trees are located, emergence surveys at dusk will be carried out and again volunteers will be trained to carry out these surveys.

So why do we want to tag and track a bat? Well the tracking will provide additional data that will add to the knowledge we are gaining about bats on the site. The roost trees that we locate will be protected and future management work will be sympathetic and just as important, this additional activity will provide new opportunities for volunteers to learn new surveying skills.

Lastly, we have launched a **photography competition**. If you're interested then more information can be found on the last page of this newsletter.



A Volunteer radio tracking in Swanton Novers NNR © Sonia Reveley

Bat spotlight— Brown long-eared bat

Brown long-eared bats are medium-sized. The ears are nearly as long as the body but not always obvious. When they are at rest they will curl their ears back like rams' horns, or tuck them away completely under their wings leaving only the pointed inner lobe of the ear (the tragus) visible.



Brown long-eared bat
© John Altringham

As well as catching insects in free flight, brown long-eared bats are gleaners, often flying slowly amongst foliage, picking insects off leaves and bark. Their broad wings and tail allow slow, highly manoeuvrable, hovering flight. Sometimes they land on the ground to catch insects or to shift them into a controllable position in the mouth, and they are even able to take insects from lighted windows. Their flight often includes

steep dives and short glides. These bats are known as 'whispering bats' because their echolocation sounds are very quiet. With their large ears, they have particularly sensitive low frequency hearing and often locate prey from the sounds made by the insect's own movements. They may sometimes use vision. Small prey is eaten in flight, but larger insects are taken to a 'perch'. Regularly used perches, which are frequently inside porches or barns, can be recognised by the accumulations of discarded insect remains, particularly wings of moths such as yellow underwings. Their habit of flying close to the ground, or even landing to tackle prey, makes long-eared bats vulnerable to attack by predators, like cats.

Summer roosts are usually located in older buildings, barns, churches and trees. Long-eared bats generally form small and quiet colonies of about 20 animals - often the first a householder knows about them is when a visit to the loft reveals a cluster of tiny faces peering down from a corner of the rafters! Winter roosts tend to be found in caves, tunnels, mines, icehouses and occasionally even trees and buildings. Their foraging habitat is open deciduous and coniferous woodland, parkland and orchards.



Brown long-eared bat © Hugh Clark

Wild about Swanton Community and Wildlife Day



Carol Williams, BCT's Director of Conservation showing how to use an endoscope to look at tree features © Jan Collins

On the 6th of May, we ran a community event, called Wild about Swanton Community and Wildlife Day. The event was an opportunity for the project to raise awareness about Swanton Novers National Nature Reserve, the work we have been doing on the bat side of things and give wildlife enthusiasts the opportunity to showcase their work and hobbies to the local community.

On the day we were lucky to have the Bat Conservation Trust, Tony Leech (Norfolk's Fungi County Recorder), Norfolk Barbastelle Study Group, Dersingham Bog Hoppers, Natural England, Norfolk Moths, North East Norfolk Bird Club (NENBC), Felbeck Trust and the Swanton Novers History Group.

In total 40 people came to the event. 2 walks were available on the day. 1 woodland walk (looking at bat tree roost features) and 1 bird

walk. The woodland walk had 11 attendees and the bird walk had 4 attendees.



Seeing a bat © Sonia Reveley



Community Day © Sonia Reveley



Harvest Mice display © Jan Collins

In addition to the displays and various activities on offer, throughout the day we also sold tea, coffee and cakes to raise some money for the village hall and we had a raffle to raise money for the Swanton Novers Woodland Bat Project. In total, we raised £81.85 for the Swanton Novers Woodland Bat Project and £ 90.29 for the Swanton Novers Village Hall. Thank you to everyone who came on the day and supported the event. Thank you to the exhibitors for their time. And finally thank you to all the volunteers who helped with the event, who all did a wonderful job. The event would not have been possible without their time and enthusiasm.

Wild about Swanton Community and Wildlife Day cont.....

Below is some feedback from members of the community about the event:



Harvest Mouse © Jan Collins

“I had the most fascinating day on the 6th May at Swanton Novers Wildlife day. To see fungi, moths, bats and harvest mice, one of which I had run up my arm with the knowledge of the participants was incredible. I found out all about these tiny mice and them to be up close to a bat and see the delicate, almost flimsy wings. I had no idea they had tails.

I came away with a sense of wonder and was so incensed with the enthusiasm of these people.”

Gillian Harman



Brown long-eared bat © Jan Collins

“The day itself was dull and drizzly, and how cold! I had put my name down for the Woodland Walk in an attempt to see the bluebells at the height of their flowering. I was delighted to discover that the event - timed to last two hours - included talks about the many bat species to be found in the Great Wood.

Bats, to me, are one of the few remaining links with prehistoric creatures. A flying mammal - what can be more fascinating?

The walk was led by Ash Murray together with an expert on bats (I apologise for not remembering her name, and hereafter will call her the Bat Lady) so we were treated to a very informative couple of hours.

We were informed as to the ecology of the area - why The Great Wood is so unique with such a diversity of trees and flora. And something I didn't know was, that there may be a pingo in the wood. Something I have seen further south of the county. Pingos are perfectly round ponds and are relics of the ice age. Not commonly seen. Amazing.

The Bat Lady talked of the different species inhabiting the woods and their various habitats, with their different feeding habits and behaviours. We looked at a tree with peeling bark, a perfect roost for bats to use as a nursery whilst having their young. We were treated to a demonstration of endoscopy which is used to look very carefully under the bark without disturbing the bats. (Yes, I know that an endoscope has sinister medical connotations...)



Woodland walk © Jan Collins



Learning to use an endoscope © Jan Collins

The youngest member of the group - a boy of about 10 - was fascinated by this piece of equipment and was shown how to use it. Eventually, having to be peeled away from it.

Of course, the two hours shot by even though the weather was a bit grim.

What a fascinating couple of hours. I could have stayed much longer.

And I saw bluebells thickly carpeting the banks of the pingo pond.

Wonderful. And all this for free!!”

Val Hart

Ancient Woodland

My first birdwatching trip to North Norfolk was forty years ago, and having been a regular visitor I thought I knew the area well before moving here. The coast is a magnet for birdwatchers but it is woodland that has captured my interest.



Wild Garlic © Sonia Reveley

A walk in ancient woodland is relaxing without the need of specialist knowledge. To enjoy the moment, it is not necessary to identify the bird which has such a delightful song, or the beautiful butterfly feeding on nectar from a flower we cannot name. However, if we choose to explore a little closer there is so much to interest and surprise us.

I mention ancient woodland because it is here where there is so much diversity and interest. An ancient woodland in England is defined as an area that has been under continuously tree cover since at least 1600AD. Some woodlands are much older. For example, there is a record in the Domesday

Book of woodland in Swanton Novers. This dates the wood back to 1086AD and it is considered likely that this wood is a remaining fragment of the pre-Neolithic 'Wildwood' which once covered a large area of Britain. One can see historical evidence of the management and importance of this ancient woodland with remnants of a medieval boundary ditch and banks. These were to prevent livestock from entering the wood and damaging coppice. It is possible that wood from the oak coppice was used to heat the nearby brick kilns and pits on the edge of the wood suggest this is where clay was excavated for the kilns.

Many plants and animals also point to the ancient origin of woodland. Some species such as Lilly of the Valley and Small-leaved Lime are slow colonisers. Others species in the wood are now largely found in colder, wetter areas further north and in the west of England. This points to their becoming established in Swanton Novers many thousands of years ago, when climatic conditions were very different to today.



Lilly of the Valley © Ash Murray

Continuous management of the woodland over centuries has supported these rare species and help maintain the diversity of other plants and animals dependent upon this otherwise diminishing habitat. The list of species recorded in the Swanton Novers NNR is impressive from fungi, plants and lichens to butterflies, dragonflies and other insects. The species list of birds, mammals and amphibians also reflect the importance of the wood in conservation terms.

Natural England manage the woodland and because of the sensitivity of the habitat access to the NNR is limited to permit holders only. However, there are opportunities to visit this and other ancient woodlands in North Norfolk.

Readers of these nature notes will be aware of my frequent references to the benefits of engaging with nature. For me, it is simply about doing something no matter how small to support wildlife and taking an interest in the outcome. Collectively we can make a difference and the RSPB's annual Big Garden Birdwatch is one example of how we can participate in conservation.



Oak tree © Sonia Reveley

There are opportunities to become even more involved. Nature conservation is becoming increasingly reliant upon the work of volunteers and donating time to support our natural heritage also brings personal benefits. Volunteering has enriched my life greatly over the years. I have learned new skills and broadened my knowledge of the natural world. I have met many interesting people from all walks of life and made many friends. Volunteering has also provided many memorable wildlife encounters which I would otherwise have missed.

One such volunteering role I have enjoyed during the last year is assisting with the Swanton Novers Woodland Bat Project. This is supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund. An important aspect of the project is to connect local communities with their woodland heritage and raise awareness of the wildlife using the wood, especially bats. Regular readers will be aware that Sonia Reveley has written several articles about the project in recent months and if you are interested in taking part please contact Sonia at SReveley@bats.org.uk



Bluebells © Sonia Reveley

The Woodland Trust state that only around 2% of the UK is now covered in ancient woodland and we are fortunate to have such a valued habitat on our doorstep.

David, A Swanton Novers Woodland Bat Volunteer

Woodland and Wildlife Champions

We are pleased to announce that we have selected 4 Woodland and Wildlife Champions. A Woodland and Wildlife Champion is someone who is trained up to carry out bat surveys and other wildlife surveys, someone who will spread the message about Swanton Novers NNR and safeguard it for future generations. Through their enthusiasm and hard work these new champions will continue with important elements of the project after its completion, by assisting with future surveys or supporting new volunteers.



Chris is a local man, who lives near Swanton Novers woods. He came to the project with no previous experience in bat survey. Since joining the project Chris has taken part in transect surveys and trapping surveys. He has also assisted the team with public engagement events like the Wild about Swanton Community Day on the 6th of May.



Jamie became interested in bats back in 2015. Before he joined the project, Jamie had already gained some bat surveying experience, having volunteered for another Norfolk bat project. Since joining the project, Jamie has taken part in transect surveys and trapping surveys. He has learnt how to radio track and can confidently use the equipment provided. In addition, Jamie has provided help with bat walks, conservation fairs and the community day on May 6th. Jamie also plans to get his rabies vaccinations so he can be trained to extract bats and process them during future trapping surveys.



Keith came to the project with a fair amount of experience having already volunteered for the Norfolk Barbastelle Study Group. Since joining the project, Keith has learnt how to use new bat survey equipment. He is paired up with new volunteers, during transect surveys so he can share his knowledge and skills. He has also analysed data using BatSound, delivered bat walks and training workshops for the project, written blogs and has taken part in trapping surveys and radio tracking.



Jim has been involved with the project right from the beginning. In the early days before the project got the green light to proceed, Jim was the person who deployed the detectors to determine if the methodology was suitable. Since the project started Jim has continued to give his time to the project and has taken part in transect and trapping surveys and some call analysis training. Since moving to a new job, Jim continues to be involved, recently helping with some trapping in May. Jim said “I am delighted to accept this award, it is a great project to be involved with and it is a privilege to work with some delightful people in a very inspiring place”.



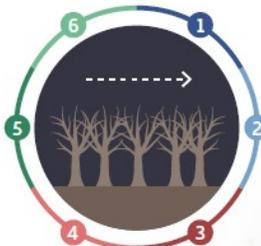
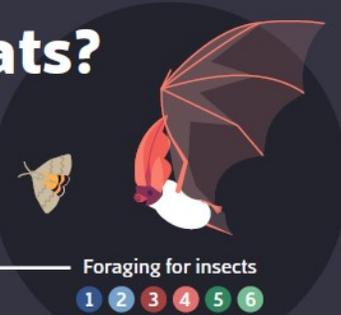
Some of the Swanton Novers Woodland Bat Project volunteers who helped on the Community Day © Jan Collins

How are trees important to bats?

Trees and woodland are important to all 18 UK bat species. Many of our bats also make use of the natural features in trees for roosting although this can vary by species and at different times of year.

The colours and numbers represent each bat species.

- 1 Barbastelle
- 3 Natterer's bat
- 5 Pipistrelle (3 species)
- 2 Bechstein's bat
- 4 Noctule
- 6 Brown long-eared bat



As a **navigational aid** especially when trees are in lines or hedges



Roosting inside **woodpecker holes**



Roosting behind **loose bark**



Roosting in **rot holes**



Feeding perch or protection during bad weather



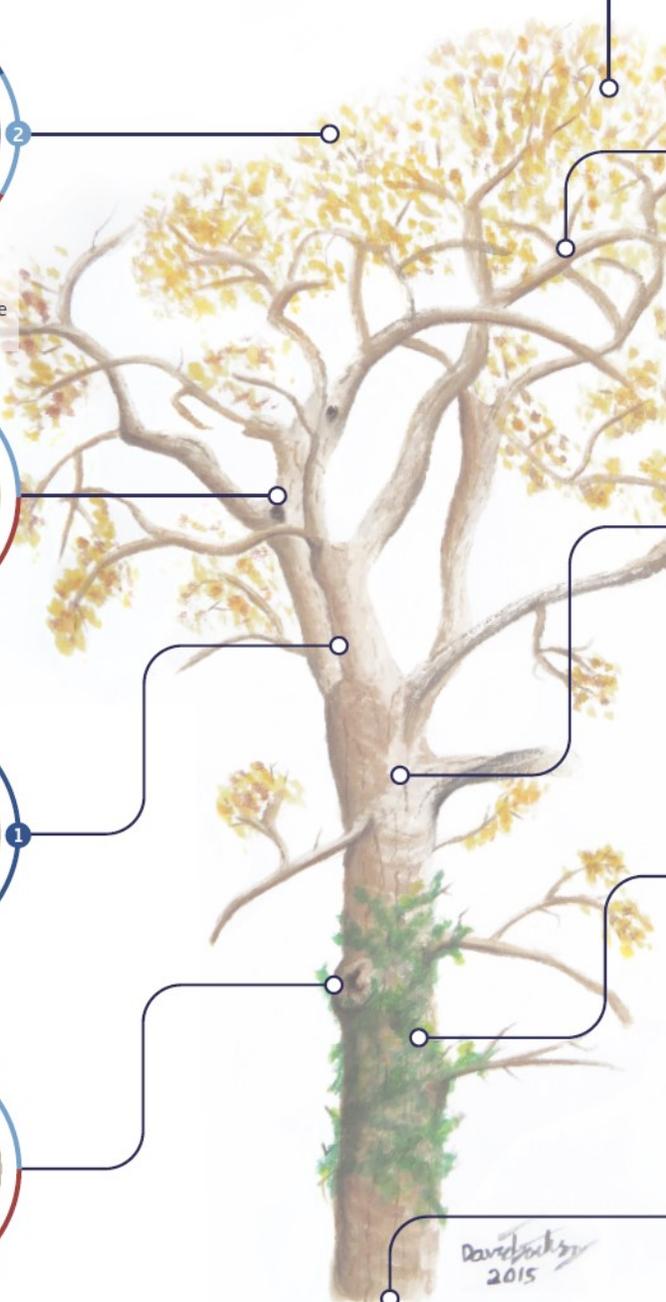
Roosting in **cracks, splits and crevices**



Occasionally roosting behind **dense ivy**



Winter hibernation in **hollow trunk** if frost-free



Photography Competition—1,2,3 Snap your Woodland

The project is currently running a photography competition called 1, 2, 3 Snap your Woodland. If you like the great outdoors and enjoy taking photographs of your surroundings, then this photography competition might tickle your fancy. 1, 2, 3 Snap your Woodland is a great way to share your love for our amazing woodlands and raise awareness about a special and unique habitat. The prize is a year's membership to Bat Conservation Trust (BCT) or the Young Batworkers' Club and the winning photographs will be uploaded onto the BCT website. The competition will close on Friday 28th of July and the winners will be announced on BCT's social media in September.

So if you live in Norfolk or are visiting the area for a holiday, why not take a stroll into a woodland nearby and see what you can capture with your camera. We look forward to seeing your photographs.



1,2,3 Snap your woodland Photography Competition



Bluebells at Swanton Novers National Nature Reserve © Sonia Reveley

Calling all photographers!

Head out to your local woods in Norfolk, reconnect with nature and capture some woodland magic.

Take part and win a year's membership to Bat Conservation Trust (BCT) or the Young Batworkers' Club. The winning photographs will also feature on the BCT website and the winners will be announced on BCT's social media.

Rules

There will be two age groups

6 – 18 years old

19 years and over

Under each age group there are three categories which you can submit to.

Woodland Wildlife (*anything from small and large mammals, birds, bugs and butterflies*)

Woodland Scenes (*landscape scenery showing our woods in all their glory*)

Woodland Plants and Fungi (*flowers, trees, seeds, fruits, and mushrooms*)

The competition will close on Friday 28th of July 2017 at midnight.

5 photographs from each category will be shortlisted by a judging panel. A winner for each category will then be selected by a public vote via the BCT's Facebook page. The photographs with the most votes wins.

Winners will be announced in September

How to enter?

To submit your photographs please send to Sonia Reveley at SReveley@bats.org.uk.

- With each entry please provide your name, age group, the category you are submitting to, contact details (from a parent or guardian if aged 6 - 18 years old), and where and when you took your photograph.
- We will contact you using the details you have provided to inform you if your photograph is selected.
- Please make sure your submitted photograph is less than 3 MB in size.
- The person entering the competition should be the person who took the photograph.
- Only one photograph entry per category.
- We retain the right to use all submitted photographs for BCT, Heritage Lottery Fund and Natural England promotional materials. The photographer retains copyright and will be credited.
- The Bat Conservation Trust (known as BCT) is a registered charity in England and Wales (1012361) and in Scotland (SC040116). Company Limited by Guarantee, Registered in England No: 2712823. Registered office: Quadrant House, 250 Kennington Lane, London SE11 5RD. Vat Reg No: 877158773

Looking for a project which you can contribute to?

We are always looking for people to help us with a range of activities from bat surveys to walks and events.

If you are interested and would like to join our team on a journey of discovery then please contact Sonia Reveley by email at SReveley@bats.org.uk or ring 07788 226528. In addition, we are able to provide talks over the winter this year, so do get in contact if you're interested.

More information including blogs can be found at www.bats.org.uk/swanton.

Bat Conservation Trust



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The National Lottery
through the Heritage Lottery Fund



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ENGLAND**