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Please forward this information to others in your group.

Dear bat group member,

Hello and welcome to the October edition of the Bat Group Bulletin! In this issue you can read about policy updates and find new opportunities.

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1. 2023 State of Nature Report. Working with over 80 research and conservation organisations, State of Nature uses the latest and best data from monitoring schemes and biological recording centres, to report on wildlife and habitat. It has some stark warnings on the state of UK habit, with only 14% of habitat in good condition, and species, with 1 in 6 being at risk of extinction. Read our article and find a link to the report here: <https://bit.ly/3QffUWh>.

2. Kate Barlow Award 2024 - Applications are Open NOW. The Kate Barlow Award aims to encourage postgraduate students to conduct a substantive bat research project and to honour the late Dr Kate Barlow's contribution to bat conservation. [Read more about her great achievements here](#). Applications for the Kate Barlow Award 2024 are now open. An application form and guidance on how to apply are available [on our website](#). The closing date for applications is **5pm GMT 30th November 2023**. The winner will be announced in March 2024. For enquiries please contact science@bats.org.uk.

3. WWF Wildlife Crime Partner of the Year Award. Massive congratulations to our [Wildlife Crime Project](#) Officer, Mark Goulding, on winning this award, presented at the Wildlife & Rural Crime Conference. See more here: <https://bit.ly/3MnBoiV>.

4. VBRV Train the Trainers Course 2024. BCT and Natural England will be running a Train the Trainers course in Spring 2024, funded by NE, for those who wish to become a licensed Volunteer Bat Roost Visitor Trainer (CL16). This will be an in-person weekend course held at FSC Preston

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Montford (Shrewsbury) on 8-10 March as well as some pre-course sessions online. More details including the trainer role description can be found here: <https://bit.ly/3H4J5pP>.

The nomination form is the first stage in the process. Selection will be based on experience, demand and geographical location. Please note: **the nomination form should come from a committee member on behalf of the bat group rather than the individual wishing to attend the course.**

Nominations are now open until **15 January 2024**. [Bat Group Committee members can make their nomination using this form](#).

5. Removal of Rabies Vaccination Requirement for VBRVs. Natural England (NE) recently announced that VBRVs are no longer required to have rabies vaccinations. NE acknowledge that VBRVs may need to handle bats in certain circumstances, for example bat identification and welfare. However, the withdrawal of the vaccination requirement is based on the agreement that handling bats as part of VBRV activity does not constitute 'regular handling', and therefore does not meet the definition set out in the [UKHSA's guidance](#) for when the vaccination is required. NE acknowledge that some volunteers may wish to continue to protect themselves while active in the VBRV role by getting newly vaccinated or continuing to maintain their rabies booster vaccinations. NE will support this by reimbursing any cost to them via VBRV expenses. NE will not reimburse VBRVs who are working with bats in a professional capacity (e.g. employed/self-employed ecological consultants).

The Volunteering Support Team will start making volunteers currently inactive due to outdated rabies vaccination active and will inform BCT's Helpline of any changes to active status. Please bear with them and the Helpline whilst documentation, policies and all relevant VBRV information are updated. If you have any questions or comments, or would like to check your volunteer status, please contact the Volunteering Support Team directly: batvolunteers@naturalengland.org.uk.

6. Testing of bats in captivity that have been in contact with people with COVID-19. COVID-19 cases are on the rise in the UK once again. It is therefore timely to remind everyone about the guidance '[IUCN SSC Bat Specialist Group \(BSG\) recommendations to reduce the risk of transmission of SARS-CoV-2 from humans to bats in bat rescue and rehabilitation centers](#)'. Although last updated in 2021, the guidance is still relevant and should be followed in the UK. The document includes the recommendation for the testing of bats, where they have been in contact with people who have been confirmed as having COVID-19 or are suspected of having the disease. This testing was undertaken for us previously by Imperial College London, but the Animal & Plant Health Agency (APHA) are now undertaking this work, for which we are very grateful.

Please get in touch with Amanda Seekings at APHA (ViralZoonosesGroup@apha.gov.uk) if you have a bat in care that has come into contact with a person who has tested positive for COVID-19 or is suspected of having COVID-19. Bats that have had such contact should not be released without testing having taken place. APHA will send you instructions (which includes collecting droppings from bats over a period of days) and a sampling kit. If you have any questions or are uncertain whether you should be requesting a sampling kit or not, please email Charley Bird, BCT's Bat Care Network Coordinator, at batcare@bats.org.uk.

7. Bat Earned Recognition Moves from Trial to 'Business As Usual'. BCT is continuing to work in partnership with NE and CIEEM on the development of a new transformative approach to licensing mitigation work in England that impacts on bats. This approach is known as Earned Recognition and aims to (1) streamline licensing, (2) raise and maintain professional standards in bat mitigation work and (3) improve outcomes for bats. More information and the most recent update from October 2023 can now be found on our website: <https://bit.ly/3QbxfJL>.

8. Species on the Edge Youth Panel is Recruiting. Are you aged between 16 and 25, based in one of the Species on the Edge project areas, and passionate about your local wildlife? If so, this is an opportunity for you! <https://buff.ly/3RLSD0E>.

9. Bat Workers Forum Minutes. This year's Bat Workers Forum was held on 3rd October, and included updates from Natural England, Natural Resources Wales, NatureScot and BCT, along with addressing items raised from the attendees. [The minutes can be found here](#).

10. British Islands Bats Volume Four. The fourth volume of the annual British Islands Bats journal is [now available to download](#), along with previous volumes. Although hosted by BCT, the journal is an independent publication edited by Tina Wiffen and Lisa Worledge. Its principal aim is to publish articles about bats and bat work across the British Islands (England, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland, Channel Islands, and Isle of Man), thereby providing a forum for information that might not otherwise be shared, from full length papers to brief notes on items of interest.

Volume Four has 15 papers on a variety of topics, contributed by bat group members, students, ecologists, and partnership projects. Please do get in touch with Tina and Lisa (britishislandsbats@gmail.com) with feedback or if you are interested in submitting articles for Volume Five, which will be published in 2024 (updated information for authors is due out before the end of the year). All volumes now have an ISSN number from the British Library (in the top right corner of the cover page).

11. British Wildlife Bat Report – Records Wanted. We are looking for records for the next of the twice-yearly bat reports for British Wildlife (for the December issue), including a round-up of notable records from the last 6 months (or longer if not previously included). Notable records would include vagrants, species discovered outside their typical range, new records of our rarer species, or anything a bit unusual or unexpected. Brief summaries of interesting results from studies can also be included. Precise locations won't be published unless this is non-sensitive information worth including. If you have any records you'd like considered for inclusion please email Philip Briggs at pbriggs@bats.org.uk. The deadline for records is **16th November**.

12. BatChat Series 5 is kicking off on Wednesday 1st November, with an exciting line-up of guests and fascinating interviews. Mark your calendars, set your reminders and get ready for the return of the Bat Conservation Trust podcast! [Check out the trailer for this new series on YouTube](#) for a taste of what's in store. If you're new to BatChat, episodes are released every second Wednesday throughout each series giving listeners content through autumn, winter and early spring with stories from the world of bat conservation. You can listen to BatChat in most podcast players; the full list is here: <https://batchat.buzzsprout.com>. We've also got an interactive map showing where the nearest episode to you was recorded [on the BCT website](#).

13. New Funding for BCT Policy Work. The UK is amid an environmental policy crisis, with a potential risk to the legislation which protects bats and other wildlife. BCT advocates for an evidence-based policy framework that supports bat species recovery across the UK, and works to ensure that legal protections for wildlife are not weakened or removed. We are grateful for a grant from [John Ellerman Foundation](#) to enable us build on this work. [Read more here](#).

14. Reminder of Guidance on Live Bats at Events. The IUCN guidance remains the same, advising 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). Please see item 4 in the [March bulletin](#) for further details.

15. 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 runs a hybrid program of online and in-person events.

- **7th November – Bat Survey Guidelines 4th edition webinar.** Webinar followed by time for questions. Live or recording-only tickets available: <https://bit.ly/3Sd7kds>.
- **7th November – Introduction to sound analysis.** Online workshop using Kaleidoscope: <https://bit.ly/3QBqfML>.
- **9th Nov–14th Dec – British bats, their ecology and conservation.** Six-session online course designed for those new to bats wanting to develop a broader understanding of bat ecology, threats and conservation action: <https://bit.ly/42arupQ>.
- **25th November – National Bat Care Conference.** In-person event to provide an opportunity for bat rehabilitators (new and experienced) and veterinary professionals to share knowledge and update skills in bat rehabilitation: <https://bit.ly/46sgy9W>.

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.

Other Events and Training.

- **22nd–23rd November – CIEEM Autumn conference.** Modernising Ecology: Techniques and Approaches: <https://bit.ly/44Hd1Ut>.
- **12th March – 3rd International Bat Research Online Symposium.** Free online event on replacement roosts for bats at buildings: <https://bit.ly/46TH9fY>.
- **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.

16. 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.

- **Developer fined over £14,000 for breaching bat mitigation licence.** BCT's Wildlife Crime Project supported this case: <https://bit.ly/46R5UcT>.
- **Launch of new BCT project, Connecting People and Landscapes.** New BCT led project gets underway, aiming to bring wildlife, farmers and communities together to create better outcomes for all: <https://bit.ly/3MiBMzc>.
- **Interview with Jan Collins in NHBS:** <https://bit.ly/3QA36LQ>.
- **Telomeres and hibernation.** Understanding the interplay between hibernation, telomeres, and climate can provide insights into the adaptive capacity and survival of bat populations facing environmental challenges: <https://bit.ly/45UngUV>.
- **Acoustic methodology for locating maternity colonies of woodland bats.** Using an acoustic triage methodology, and looking at survey effort, to give a basis for effective further specialist surveys: <https://bit.ly/46N915Q>.
- **Global systematic map of research on bats in agricultural systems.** Identifying publication trends and research gaps: <https://bit.ly/3QiaJFb>.

- **Wooded streets favour bat activity in urban areas.** Evidence of common pipistrelles utilising wooded streets as corridors, with lighting level having no significant effect: <https://bit.ly/3FAX4nB>.
- **Fossil skull discovery supports early origin for echolocation.** 50mya uncrushed skull of a newly identified species suggests it was capable of advanced laryngeal echolocation: <https://bit.ly/479x7av>.
- **IUCN SSC guidelines on human-wildlife conflict and coexistence.** Newly released guidelines aim to provide foundations and principles for good practice, with clear, practical guidance on how best to tackle conflicts and enable coexistence with wildlife: <https://bit.ly/46Nj4b1>.

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.**