



Spotlight on South West of England Bat Groups

Devon Bat Group

- Rolled out a new membership system which is much better, thanks Sam.
- Restarted hibernation checks with over 50 people taking part at the East Budleigh buildings and Exeter catacombs visits. Some bats were found in unusual places, see the photo to the right.
- We'll be re-starting bat box checks in Ashclyst Forest with NT and Jo Rabineau



Devon Bat Group

- We have three new SM mini bat detectors available for loan for NBMP counts, including Sidmouth, Honiton and East Budleigh. And there'll be training sessions about how to use them.
- Next meeting is Thursday 25th May! Save the date.
- If you have any records of interest please do send them to:
devonbatgrouprecords@gmail.com
- Next year is our big 40th anniversary!





What has the Dorset Bat Group ever done for bats?

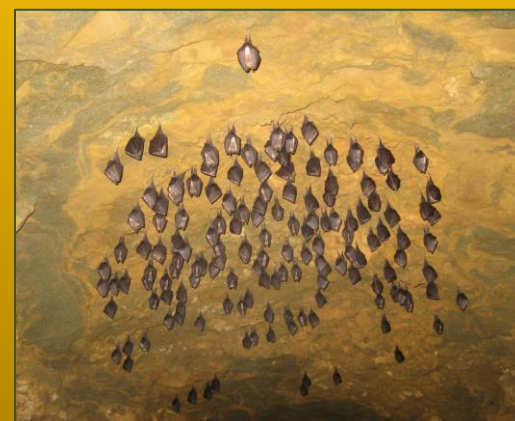
The group checks over 1,000 boxes, spread across 18 sites with seven species regularly seen

Bat boxes



The group checks around dozen hibernation sites, many of which are home to Greater Horseshoe Bats, but we do see a few others too!

Hibernation



Swarming Studies

We have caught 13 of the UK's species at our main swarming site and have shown that serotine and common pipistrelle are swarming species too

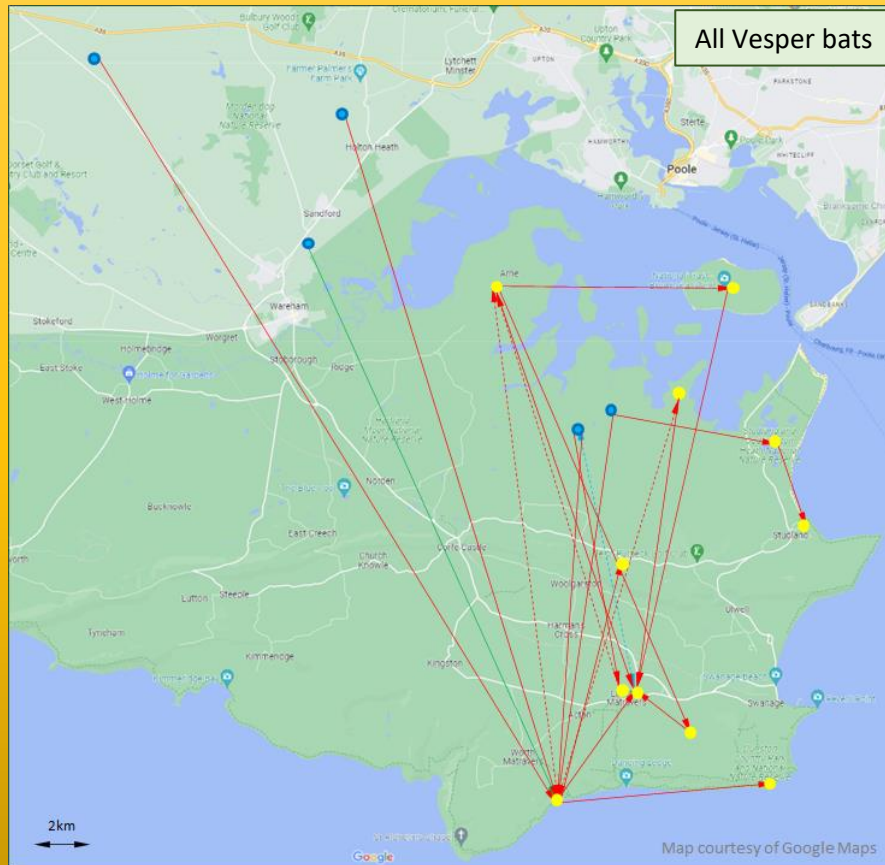




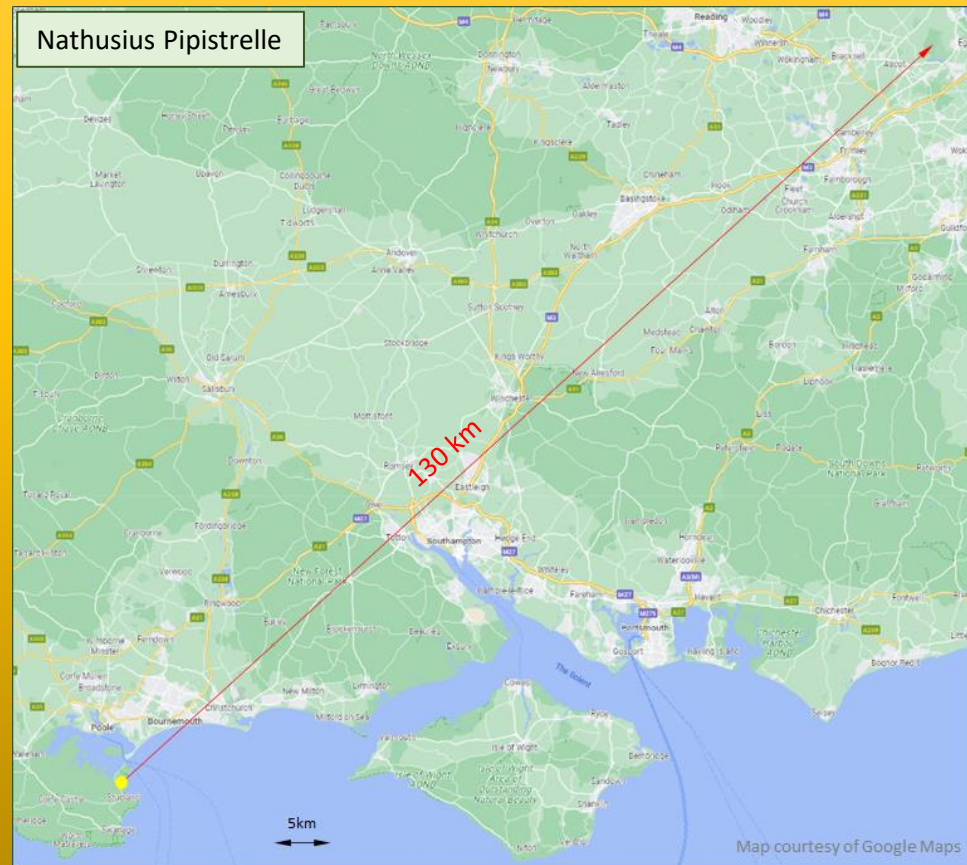
Ringling Studies

Our ringing studies are building up a site interaction map not only within Dorset but also outside the county

All Vesper bats



Nathusius Pipistrelle



Radio Tracking

Our radio tracking work has focused on Bechstein's,
Greater Horseshoe and Barbastelle Bats





As part of our re-launch we're building a new website, we've started a formal training programme for VBRVs and Bat Carers, and we're improving communications with our members and the public

[View this email in your browser](#)

What's happening in December with Dorset Bat Group



Talks, Training and Hibernation checks!

Volunteer Bat Roost Visitor Training Syllabus

This syllabus is to be used as a checklist for both the trainee volunteer bat roost visitor (VBRV) and the trainer.

Subject	Heading	What should VBRVs know/be able to do?	Skill?
Legislation & licensing	Basic protection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Describe the protection afforded to bats in England Explain the wider context of UK wildlife legislation concerning bats and related advice Explain how the law regarding bats is administered in England 	Knowledge
	Defences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explain the defences under which householders can seek advice 	Knowledge
	Licensable activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Differentiate between activities that require a licence and activities that do not 	Knowledge
	Licences for bat workers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Describe the purposes of the different licences relating to bats and restrictions 	Knowledge
	Licences for others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Describe the NE system of advice and the role of the VBRVs Understand the role of VBRVs in different situations Understand the conditions associated with the VBRV licence 	Knowledge
Bat biology and ecology	Role of bat workers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Describe the NE system of advice and the role of the VBRVs Understand the role of VBRVs in different situations Understand the conditions associated with the VBRV licence 	Knowledge
	Basic biology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Taxonomy Characteristics of families Physical adaptations for flight Physiological specialisations Senses 	Knowledge
	Basic ecology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Importance in ecosystems Life histories Lifespan Breeding Food and feeding Seasonality 	Knowledge
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Describe the role that bats play within the wider ecosystem Describe the life cycle of a bat in the UK Describe how long bats typically live for Describe when mating takes place in UK bats Define a roost Explain the need of bats to feed Recall the types of food taken by bats Explain the differing requirements of bats at different times of years 	Knowledge

Somerset Bat Group



We have launched our new community engagement and mapping project - **the Big Bat Count!**

This year around 120 people took part across 5 big bat counts, adding about 650 bat flight records to iNaturalist.



© <https://somersebat.group/>

We hope to more than double that this year.

If you want to take part to count the bats in your area and get involved have a look on:

<https://somersebat.group/bats/count/>



Wiltshire Bat Group



The following slides are about the group's South Wiltshire Greater Horseshoe Bat Project.

To read these slides in more detail go to the delegate hub
<https://www.bats.org.uk/sw-bat-conference-hub>



South Wiltshire Greater Horseshoe Bat Project



- A Wiltshire Bat Group led project in association with Natural England, Black Sheep Countryside Management, and support from Prof Fiona Mathews, University of Sussex Brighton.
- Launched in autumn 2020 to focus conservation action and improved monitoring efforts on the Greater horseshoe bats (and other bat species!) of South Wiltshire.

Key themes include:

- Expansion of roost monitoring inc. key hibernation sites
- Creating and enhancing roosting sites
- Landscape-scale detector surveys
- dung beetle surveys & working with livestock farmers
- Promoting awareness of bats and favourable land management



Gareth Harris, Wiltshire Bat Group / Gareth Harris Ecology & Conservation

South Wiltshire Greater Horseshoe Bat Project



- **Expansion of roost monitoring inc. key hibernation sites**

The project monitors the two bat SSSI in the project area which together make up the bat SAC, plus additional stone mines, ice houses, grottoes in the area.

Winter 2022-23 – total winter count exceed 1500 hibernating bats of 9 species.

- **Creating and enhancing roosting sites**

In 2021 the project re-grilled a small stone mine (funded by local landowners. Construction by Colin Morris).

In 2022 the project completed construction of a bat house for Greater horseshoe bats. (Funded by Natural England & Wiltshire Bat Group, constructed by Lloyd Turner & Helen Shackleton, designed by Colin Morris & Gareth Harris).

South Wiltshire Greater Horseshoe Bat Project



- **Landscape-scale detector surveys**

Static detector monitoring delivered in 2020-2022 across South Wiltshire, over 80 survey locations, generating huge volumes of data

Deployment undertaken by project volunteers (Peter Thompson, Jenny Bennett, Gareth Harris), and farmer groups such as Chalke Valley Farmer Group (Simon Smart).

Huge support from local landowners & farmers.

Data management through the BTO Acoustic Pipeline and all data checked and verified by Gareth Harris. Huge thanks to Stuart Newson BTO.

Confirmed records of at least 14 species including widespread records of Leisler's bat, new sites for Nathusius' pipistrelle, and expanding knowledge of horseshoe bat distribution. Barbastelle bats are still "everywhere".

South Wiltshire Greater Horseshoe Bat Project



- **Dung beetle surveys & working with livestock farmers**

Launch of county wide dung beetle surveys, thanks to huge support from landowners, Natural England, graziers.

All data shared with the national recording scheme, including species new to county.

Thanks to Marc Arbuckle for all species ID.

Close partnership working with MOD / Defence Infrastructure Organisation on the Salisbury Plain training area, delivering bat & dung beetle surveys, and training events with *Dung Beetles for Farmers*, in 2021 & 2022.

Wessex Water & Natural England funded surveys in 2021 and 2022.

Suite of surveys in vicinity of Greater horseshoe bat roosting sites, to assess food availability.

Considerable interest from the farming community underpins this work, especially via the farmer groups (Chalke Valley, Nadder Valley, SPTA DELTA, Pewsey Downs, Porton to Plain).

South Wiltshire Greater Horseshoe Bat Project



- Promoting awareness of bats and favourable land management

Multiple guided walks for community groups and farmer groups.....

Evening talks for neighbourhood plan groups, parish councils, natural history groups, the bat group.....

Dung beetle events for local farmer groups delivered in conjunction with Dung Beetles for Farmer (thanks to Max Anderson & Sally-Ann Spence). At least 7 events delivered.

Newsletter articles & Blogs published. E.g. with Cranborne Chase AONB, the bat group, Wessex Water.

Landowner & community group engagement & advisory visits promoting bats, roosts and land management.

Huge thanks to the farmers, landowners and funders supporting this work, including Natural England, Defence Infrastructure Organisation, Cranborne Chase AONB FiPL, Wessex Water and Wiltshire Bat Group.

For more information, email Gareth on wiltsbatsrecords@gmail.com