



BATMANN

the newsletter of the Manx Bat Group

Is this IOM's Mother of the Year?

It started unremarkably – seemed like just another run-of-the-mill bat call one Saturday afternoon in the middle of July.

The call came from Ed, who mans our overspill Bat Helpline number in the south, to say that a householder had phoned from Braddan having found a bat on her drive – something about a baby – and would I be able to attend?

Generally, I reserve judgement when 'babies' are mentioned as often members of the public don't realise just how small our Manx bats are and tend to assume that anything the size of, say, a pipistrelle must be a baby.

I rang the number Ed passed me to confirm the details and let the lady know I was on the way. What she told me definitely aroused my interest:

"I think it's given birth – the bat is under the car, and I'm trying to keep the cats away!"

I reassured the lady that I would be there as soon as possible. I think it took me 10 minutes!

What I found at the scene was a great deal of excitement centred on a small red hatchback. Neighbours had been involved and the car was surrounded, while various children were assisting in cat control.

I could see what appeared to be a Leisler's bat making itself as small as possible against the underside of the front nearside tyre. Gently prising the animal away from the tyre I could feel through



These Leisler's twin babies are similar in size and colour to adult pipistrelle bats

the glove that I did seem to have a lot of bat in the hand, even for a Leisler's.

Curiosity gave way to astonishment when I discovered that in my hand there were **three** bats – an adult female with two babies. Each baby was attached and suckling on a nipple on either side of its mother. The youngsters were quite well developed – each was approaching the size of an adult pipistrelle! All three seemed healthy, although the mother appeared to be exhausted!

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Contributions for the newsletter may be sent
for consideration to the editor at:
info@manxbatgroup.org

Members can also submit stories via our
website. Just log in then choose 'Submit an
article' from the user menu

www.manxbatgroup.org

Manx Bat Group Committee

Chairman: Bob Moon
chairman@manxbatgroup.org

Treasurer: Nick Pinder
treasurer@manxbatgroup.org

Secretary: Margaret Hunter
info@manxbatgroup.org

Recorder: Nick Pinder
records@manxbatgroup.org

DEFA representative: Richard Selman

Other committee members: Shem Allanson,
Jill Dunlop, Richard Fryer, Hadyn Glaister,
Andrea Jones, Sue Moon

BatMann and website: Margaret Hunter

Get involved!

There are lots of opportunities for you to
get involved in Bat Group activities, and
at the same time learn more about bats
and help promote their conservation:

Bat surveys

We get asked to survey properties subject
to planning proposals/building work for
any potential issues that may affect bats.
We usually visit twice and need lots of
volunteers to cover all angles!

Educational activities

We visit schools, youth and community
groups and workplaces to give talks about
bats, run awareness-raising activities or
lead private bat walks.

Your bat stories

Tell us your bat-related news, bat-spotting
records or stories of encounters with bats
and we may include them in *BatMann* or
the website.

Bat boxes

Help build bat boxes and check on those
already placed around the island.

Roost checks and surveys

Help us monitor bat activity and habitat
during checks of known roost sites,
looking for new roosts, eg bridge surveys,
and by helping with structured surveys,
such as car surveys and Bat Search.

Bat care

Become a licensed bat worker so you can
care for grounded and injured bats, or
bats disturbed during building works. Full
training is available for this role.

Bat Helpline

**If you find an injured or grounded bat
or have a bat query, please call:**

366177



This is highly unusual. As far as we know, it is the first record of multiple births for this species in the Isle of Man. All the literature states that Leisler's only give birth to one baby, although twins do sometimes occur in Eastern Europe.

But why was this mother away from her roost with her two youngsters? Was there something wrong with the roost? Where was the roost? There were many questions still requiring answers.

We then started getting reports of further grounded bats. In the next three days, eight grounded bats were reported, all Leisler's, all babies, and all from the same neighbourhood.

On the second day Richard discovered the roost – behind the soffit boards on the gable end of the neighbouring house to where the mother and twins were found. It was a large colony – 46 bats were counted leaving the roost to forage at dusk.

At this point we thought to check the other Leisler's maternity colony, a kilometre away in Union Mills, and found it to be ... empty!

So now we knew about the 'new' Leisler's maternity roost, but there were still a couple of unanswered questions.

We now think we know (or at least have assumed) that the Union Mills colony had moved to Braddan – but **why** did they do that?

And above all, **how did** this female bat manage to fly 1 km from Union Mills to Braddan with two large youngsters on board?

Bob Moon



Out and about at the summer shows



A perhaps surprising comment we heard a few times was along the lines of "I didn't know we had bats on the Isle of Man!" People were interested to learn that we have seven species of bats here (not including the fruit bats in the Wildlife Park!) and were often amazed to discover just how small our bats are.

Many people were keen to come and tell us that they had seen bats in their garden or near their house and would like to know what sort of bats they were.

Our stall managed to kindle childhood memories for one lady out for a day trip from the Ellan Vannin home. She told us she remembered seeing bats when she was young in Leeds and that she used to be scared of them. Now she was quite happy to see the photographs we had on display and went away with a Bats of the Isle of Man information leaflet.

Another woman who said she used to be afraid of bats recounted how she overcame that fear by visiting the fruit bats at the Wildlife Park.

This year was our second summer when we set up stalls at the Tynwald Fair and the Southern and Royal agricultural shows to get the message out about conservation of bats in the Isle of Man.

This is proving to be very worthwhile, both in terms of reaching the public with information about bats, but also enabling us to hear from people about their experiences of bats and building up a better picture of bats on the island.

I've summarised here just a few of the memorable moments from our time out and about this summer.





Catriona with her bat ring

other places, including South Africa, Canada, Switzerland, France and ... the Wirral.

Our ever-popular game of Find the Bat was a hit again with the children. We even had a boy who specifically sought out our stall because he had played last year and wanted to play again! As well as a bit of fun, it provides

She was intrigued and spent a happy two hours just watching them and, in her own words is “now a convert”.

We had a man on a mission – sent by his wife to get instructions on how to build a bat box. We were happy to help with a few instruction sheets and he also purchased a booklet with lots of information on building and siting boxes for bats. (His wife also wanted an owl box, but we couldn’t help with that one!)

Our bat shop was very popular as always, and we sold everything from bat postcards, pencils and stickers to cookie cutters, kites and socks. The green hanging glow-in-the-dark bats are a definite hit with the children! Catriona from Castletown, pictured above, was pleased with her bat ring.

Of course, the shows don’t just attract Isle of Man residents and we had visitors from lots of

a good opportunity to start talking with children about bats.

Importantly, we were able to drum up a lot of interest in our bat walks (as you’ll see in the report on page 10 about the Silverdale walk. We also received a lot of interest in volunteering for Bat Search, our new bat monitoring project. There will be a report on that in the next issue.

Margaret Hunter

The Bat Shop



Something batty in the wine cellars in Wales

Louise Samson, Forestry Warden at DEFA, tells us about some work she was involved with in the UK on lesser horseshoe and Bechstein's bats.

While working in the UK I assisted with monitoring lesser horseshoe bats and surveying Bechstein's bats, work that may be of interest to *BatMann* readers.

Lesser horseshoe bats

Lesser horseshoe bats are widespread but rare across Europe. Mid Wales is a stronghold for this species and the population has increased in this area in recent years.

Because of their rarity across Europe they are listed in Annex II of the Habitats Directive, and this enables the UK government conservation bodies to designate sites where significant populations occur as Special Areas of Conservation (SAC).

I was involved with monitoring lesser horseshoe bats within the Tanat and Vyrnwy Bat Sites SAC, as well as other significant roost sites in Powys.

Lesser horseshoe bats are plum-sized and at rest hang upside down from the roof with their wings wrapped around their bodies. When in torpor they are usually undisturbed by human presence, making them relatively easy to count.

Hibernation roosts monitored included mine adits, a former slurry pit and wine cellars in large estate houses. Three people entered each roost and counted the hanging bats using counters, and an average of the three counts was taken as the final figure. The largest hibernation roost I monitored was in a wine cellar and had 290 bats.

Counts at maternity roosts were undertaken in mid June, just before the females give birth, when numbers



Maternity roost for 245 lesser horseshoe bats illustrating the tree and hedgerow connectivity favoured by this species (© Louise Samson)

peak. Maternity roosts are usually in old buildings with large, dark loft voids and an access point big enough for the bats to fly directly in and out of.

Maternity roosts monitored included several stable blocks, old farmhouses and a luxurious country hotel. Three people counted the bats as they emerged from the roost at dusk and an average count was taken as the final figure.

The largest maternity roost I monitored had 314 lesser horseshoe bats and was in an old farmhouse.

Bechstein's bats

I also spent an evening radio-tracking Bechstein's bats at a site in Worcestershire. Bechstein's bats are one of the UK's rarest species and are closely associated with woodlands.

Bechstein's bats often roost in holes created by woodpeckers, but will also

use other cracks and crevices in trees. They are similar in appearance to the Natterer's bat found in the Isle of Man.

The Worcestershire population of Bechstein's was discovered following a national survey coordinated by the Bat Conservation Trust and the radio-tracking was funded by the People's Trust for Endangered Species. Three bats were caught using acoustic lures and harp traps and fitted with radio tags. This allowed for the bats to be followed for approximately 11 nights and enabled us to identify roosts and foraging areas.

The findings will be used to ensure appropriate management of the woodland is undertaken that is compatible with the bats, as well as with a rare butterfly species that also occurs in the wood.

For species information on lesser horseshoe and Bechstein's bats see:

www.bats.org.uk/pages/uk_bats.html



Bechstein's bat (© Derek Smith, Surrey Bat Group)

We need your records of bats and roosts!

The Manx Bat Group has been recording bats since 1990 and these records help to build up a picture of bat activity in the Isle of Man. The number of records submitted fluctuates considerably from year to year and in order to reach a greater level of consistency all members are encouraged to submit records of sightings and specimens they have come across.

Any bat record is useful, even if you can't say which of the seven species it is. And we don't just want to know about roosting bats; it is important for us to know of areas where bats congregate, perhaps to feed, or even where they cross roads or other unfavourable habitat.

Bat roosts are protected by law and the planners are therefore interested to know of any roosts in buildings which may be subject to alterations or renovations.

Important bat habitats, such as feeding areas, must also be protected under international conservation conventions. In the Isle of Man this is presently done through the Wildlife Sites system when important feeding areas are identified, perhaps through a significant number of bat records over a period of time.

You can submit a record online via the Manx Bat Group website by choosing **Submit a record** from the **Manx bats/Records** menu at the top:

<http://www.manxbatgroup.org/index.php/manx-bats/records/submit-a-record>

If you have photographs or drawings of the roost or record site or a copy of notes you took at the time you can submit these online with the form. If you prefer to submit a paper record please ask for a supply of forms from the Bat Group, or download one from our website.

You don't have to fill in every box on the form but the more information you can give, the more useful the record will be. The date is important but, if it's a historical record, eg one that you remember from your childhood, an indication of the year would be all that we require. Give a grid reference if you know how to, or otherwise state the location, at least to a parish name. Weather conditions are useful and what type of record. For example, did you see the bat(s) or just hear them on a detector? Were they emerging from a roost (many bats all coming out of the same place) or was it one bat your cat brought in? Did you see a bat at all or just the signs of bats, such as droppings (similar in size and shape to mouse droppings but bat droppings crumble to dust when pinched).

Feeding bats can be distinguished by the frequent rasping buzz on a bat detector (actually just bat calls issued more and more rapidly as it closes in on its prey) or, if you don't have a detector, just by the frequent repeated passes over the same spot made by the bat. If possible, we try to distinguish between bats apparently feeding and those just passing through, in transit, which just rapidly travel in one consistent direction.

Bat roosts are protected by law, and roosts are the most valuable records. If you are submitting a record of a bat roost, please indicate where you think the roost entrance is and let us know if the owner of the structure (house, ruin, tree etc) is aware that there is a roost or not. An indication of the numbers of bats exiting the roost would also be most useful.

Nick Pinder, Recorder

MANX BAT GROUP REPORT FORM

Please complete fully using one form per species, using tick boxes and spaces as appropriate. If unable to provide a 6-figure grid reference, please provide accurate information on the locality overleaf.

Date: / /		Locality:		Grid Ref.	NX				
Species:	Confirmed by:	Record Type:		Visual <input type="checkbox"/>	Detector <input type="checkbox"/>	Historic <input type="checkbox"/>			
approx. nos:				Roosting <input type="checkbox"/>	Emergence <input type="checkbox"/>	Specimen <input type="checkbox"/>		No bats found <input type="checkbox"/>	
Weather:		Temperature:	Wind:	Rain:					
If roost: exact location and address		If visual: bat activity		If specimen: was it live <input type="checkbox"/> or dead <input type="checkbox"/> where exactly was it found?					
Address:		apparently feeding <input type="checkbox"/> in transit <input type="checkbox"/> droppings <input type="checkbox"/> urine stains <input type="checkbox"/>							
Present owner:		PLEASE USE THE BACK OF THIS FORM TO RECORD ANY FURTHER NOTES <input type="checkbox"/>							
Tel no:									
Owner aware? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>									
Reported by:		FOR OFFICE USE ONLY							
Please send this form to:		Treat with confidence <input type="checkbox"/>		[/] = to do <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> = done					
Manx Bat Group Recorder		Enter BDB <input type="checkbox"/> roost visit arranged <input type="checkbox"/>		Tell DEFA <input type="checkbox"/>					
The Old Chapel, Jurby East, IM7 3HD		Enter roost list <input type="checkbox"/> annual count arranged <input type="checkbox"/>		Tell MNCT <input type="checkbox"/>					
(897499 / records@manxbatgroup.org)		Filed: by species <input type="checkbox"/> by location <input type="checkbox"/>		Tell Gov't vets <input type="checkbox"/>					
		RECORD NO:							

Batting for boys

A visiting group of cub scouts from Belfast were treated to an evening of bat watching at Silverdale on 29th July, led by Richard Selman and Margaret Hunter of the Manx Bat Group.

The troop are regular visitors to the Isle of Man for their summer camps, and this request for a guided bat walk followed a previous successful batting expedition led by Liz Charter a few years ago.

The boys listened as Richard told them about Manx bats and then, after donning MBG hi-viz vests and distributing bat detectors, we all walked upriver from Ballasalla. The boys were thrilled to watch pipistrelles beating back and forth over their heads in Silverdale Glen.

They had already visited the bats at the Curragh Wildlife Park and enjoyed

seeing our native bats in their natural surroundings.

The troop kindly made a donation to the MBG funds as thanks.

Richard Selman



European Bat Night, Silverdale, August 2012

Our annual tradition of holding a public bat walk on European Bat Night at the end of August was again a successful event this year, with a great turnout.

The evening began with a Bat Group members' barbecue, which we enjoyed in the grassy area north of the pond. Jill Dunlop gets the prize for the most sophisticated BBQ meal with her top-of-the-range sardines and fresh pineapple, whereas the rest of us tucked into the usual sausages and burgers!

Oscar the greyhound, a regular now on our bat walks, kept a watchful eye on the proceedings but waited patiently until he was offered a morsel of his favourite treat – not sausages but fish!

Oscar eyes up the sausages (but he was very good!)



*Gathering for the annual
European Bat Night walk
2012 at Silverdale Glen*



However, unlike on previous visits, the bats weren't keen to put on a show. Quite late, and after most people had left to go home, those who stayed on had good views of Daubenton's at the far end of the pond.

Another highlight of the evening for many,

After the barbecue, around 50 people gathered at the pond for a guided bat walk. Many were new to bat watching and were treated to a pipistrelle flying right overhead during the introductory talk by Bob Moon, so there was still plenty of light to get a good view.

We headed off down the riverside path towards Ballasalla and had some great bat sightings at the pond not far in. The bat detectors were in full swing to help people identify the bats' feeding buzzes, of which there were plenty. There were still enough midges left, though, to necessitate a liberal application of insect repellent around the group.

We finished up back at the Silverdale Glen pond, hoping to have good views of the Daubenton's bats gleaning over the surface of the water.

especially those who had not seen a bat before, was the opportunity to get a close-up look at a pipistrelle bat that had been in care but was now ready for release.

Richard Selman showed the bat to small groups of onlookers and was kept busy answering lots of questions about bats and bat care.

Margaret Hunter

Bob giving his introductory talk



Geoffroy's bat found in UK



A Geoffroy's bat (*Myotis emarginatus*) has been found by an ecologist carrying out a survey on National Trust land in the South Downs in West Sussex. The species is usually found in continental Europe.

Daniel Whitby thinks the bat may be another example of a new species moving in from the continent. Last year another European species, Alcaho's bat, was also found in Sussex.

Geoffroy's bat is nicknamed the notch-eared bat because it has a distinctive notch in the top part of its ear. It is usually found on the edge of woodland scrub and grassland.

Read more:

www.sussexbatgroup.org.uk/batsinsussex/latest-news/geoffroysbatdiscoveredinsussex

Let's fall in love (quietly!)

Scientists in Germany have found that bats are able to find and kill otherwise silent flies when they are mating. While getting 'excited' the flies produce loud buzzing sounds that can be heard by the bats. The team tested the theory with a pair of dead flies and a recording of the mating noises and found that with the noise on the bats attacked the loudspeakers!

www.wired.co.uk/news/archive/2012-07/24/fly-sex

Bat crafts?

The craft group at the prison is always looking for new ideas for things to make, so we thought we'd suggest some bat-related items they could tackle.

We would hope to be able to sell anything produced in our bat shop. So what would you buy? Bags? Pencil cases? Cushions? Hats? T-shirts? Please send us any good suggestions.

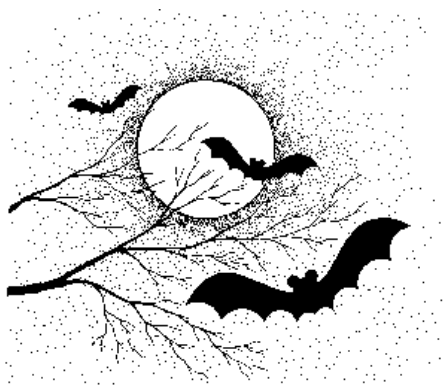
Bats are lunar phobic

Refuting the stereotypical halloween image of bats flying across the moon, scientists in Mexico have discovered that 'lunar phobia' is common among bats. Bringing together research from around the world, they found that bat activity in moonlit areas decreased on bright nights compared with bats in darker places.

It may be that the bats are more easily spotted by predators in moonlight, or perhaps their prey becomes more scarce when there is more light. One exception is bats that fly above the treetops, which do not tend to decrease their activity on brighter nights.

Read more on BBC Nature News:

www.bbc.co.uk/nature/19719986



Could you volunteer to be on the Committee?

The short answer is yes! If you're a Bat Group member, we'd welcome your participation. You don't need any special skills or knowledge, just enthusiasm.

The day-to-day activities of the Manx Bat Group are managed by a committee of volunteers, which is elected each year at the AGM, along with the designated officers required under our constitution.

The committee usually meets monthly, in different locations around the island, to administer the group and deal with any issues relating to conservation of bats and their habitats on the island.

Here's a summary of some of the tasks the committee has dealt with recently. It's not all paperwork!

Awareness-raising

This year we have organised stalls at Tynwald Fair and the agricultural shows to raise awareness about bats and conservation. This means not just booking a space but preparing information sheets, doing radio interviews, and even stocking up the bat shop etc.

Bat surveys

The MBG is regularly engaged to carry out bat surveys required under the planning process, for which the group charges a consultation and report fee. The surveys are carried out by volunteers. Examples of places that need surveys have been an area scheduled for housing development, private barns and houses being extended and developed, a care home due to remove asbestos, a church taking down an old toilet block, and some MEA substations where repair work is needed. Interesting work!

Bat walks and talks

The committee sets the programme for our public bat walks, and arranges walk leaders, equipment and publicity.

We also get regular requests from community groups for guided bat walks and talks about bats. This year we have sent volunteers to a men's group, several cub scout groups, schools and the WI.

Bat information

We have started to revamp our info sheets and general stationery to update content and create a consistent look with our new logo. There's always more work to be done in this area. The group's website also needs to be kept up to date.

Bat Search

A big project for 2012 has been our first Bat Search, a project to engage volunteers in monitoring bats across the island. This has taken a lot of organisation and training and we'll report at this year's AGM.

Designated officers

As well as ordinary committee members we require certain designated officers:

Chairman: chairs committee meetings and makes sure the group sticks to its policies and aims.

Treasurer: manages the group's money and bookkeeping and prepares accounts.

Secretary: administers meetings and deals with general correspondence.

Recorder: records and collates bat records for the island.

If you can give some time to be on the Committee, please put your name forward at the AGM – or get someone else to nominate you if you're shy!

Just for fun!

Here's a Hop Tu Naa puzzle for you. See if you can spot the seven differences between these batty pictures. Answers on the back page (don't peek!).

Spot The Seven Differences



Winter programme 2012-2013

Plans are under way for our programme of bat-related activities over the winter months while our bats are hibernating. Preliminary details are below, but we'd also like to hear your ideas for other activities for the Bat Group.

- **Survey of overwintering bats:** There will be a meeting in December of people interested in surveying overwintering bats. We will list likely hibernation sites and decide a plan of action. Please indicate interest to chairman@manxbatgroup.org.
- **Bat care training:** There will be a training day in early spring for members who would like to get involved in bat care and rehabilitation. Please let us know now if you are interested so we can arrange a suitable date.
- **Bat box making:** Come and make a bat box for your own garden or to go to a suitable location. Date and venue to be arranged (probably February).

Other events for your diary

BCT now has a searchable events listing page on its website, so if you're heading to the UK for a visit and fancy some bat activities, have a look to see if there's a bat event near where you are going: www.bats.org.uk/events.php

Spot the difference – the answers!

