



# BATMANN

the newsletter of the Manx Bat Group

## Scoil Phurt le Moirrey pupils learn about bats

On Monday 28th November 2011 Nick Pinder and I visited Scoil Phurt le Moirrey to meet the pupils in the Smartest Giant Class (aged 4 to 6 Reception and Year 1).

The class have been learning about nocturnal animals, and were keen to learn more about bats with their teacher, Mrs Callaghan.

Nick answered a variety of challenging questions the pupils had ready, including why do bats fly at night and where do they live?

The children listened to a bat story and learned some bat songs. They heard bat calls played on a sound system and saw a bat detector.

There was the opportunity for batty craft activities, cutting out card bats and decorating them, and carefully putting folds in the wings.

The children liked handling the soft toy bats we had brought along and playing a version of Kim's Game with a bat theme.

As well as lovely displays of bat art and models, the class even had its own 'bat cave', which had really captured the pupils' imaginations. You can see a photo of one of their bat displays below.

And if you'd like to see the class, Nick and Jill in action, just follow this link:

[https://www2.sch.im/groups/splm/weblog/aa315/Manx\\_Bat\\_Group.html](https://www2.sch.im/groups/splm/weblog/aa315/Manx_Bat_Group.html)

**Jill Dunlop**



*Bat collage by pupils at Scoil Phurt le Moirrey*

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

## Manx Bat Group

**Chairman:** Bob Moon

**Treasurer:** Nick Pinder

**Secretary:** Margaret Hunter

**Recorder:** Nick Pinder

**DEFA representative:** Richard Selman

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

## Bat Helpline

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

**366177**

**www.manxbatgroup.org**

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## 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 Search – Your Bat Group Needs YOU

This year the Manx Bat Group is launching **Bat Search** – a special project to mark 2012 as International Year of the Bat.

The idea is to get as many people as possible out and about around the Isle of Man looking for bats and telling us what they find. We hope that, among other things, it will:

- raise awareness of bats among island residents;
- encourage involvement by people who are new to bats and wildlife conservation in general; and
- attract new members to join the Manx Bat Group.

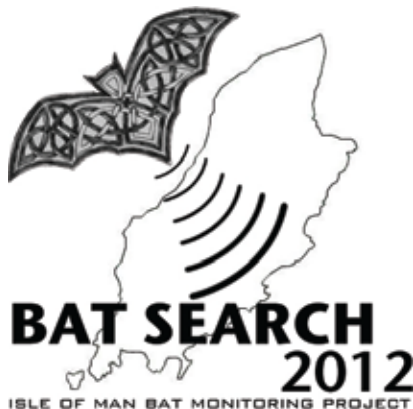
We also hope to continue the Bat Search project in future years, having laid the foundations for future bat monitoring.

Bat Search will recruit and train a group of volunteers, from among residents island-wide, to go out during the spring and summer months this year to watch and listen for bat activity.

Interested? You will be encouraged to monitor your own locality, allowing you to get to know more about your own neighbourhood bats.

Because volunteers will be engaged in late-night survey work, we will only recruit people who are over 16, although there is no reason why children can't accompany adults on the surveys.

Once signed up, we will run two or three training evenings to teach you how to use a bat detector and how to complete the Bat Search recording sheet. Each volunteer will get a goody bag containing all the equipment you will need to carry out the surveys. This will include a bat detector and hi-visibility vest on temporary loan.



You will be assigned to a 1km square of your choice and will then design your own route to be followed each time you go out to search for bats. The routes will each contain 10 sampling points where you will stop and listen/watch for bats for two minutes at a time.

The surveys can be walked, run, cycled or driven according to your choice and capabilities. We will ask you to complete at least three surveys – in late June, late July and late August – although you can do many more if you wish.

We will also need existing Bat Group members to act as project contacts to assist the volunteers with minor queries, help them design their survey routes, carry out project admin and collate the results as they come back. It would be useful to have a network of contacts located around the island to be able to offer local support to volunteers.

If you would like to volunteer for the surveys, help out as a project contact, or get involved in any other way, then please get in touch with Bob Moon now:

612067 or [bmoon@manx.net](mailto:bmoon@manx.net)

## Bat walk at Peel with 3rd Woodthorpe Scouts

Bob and Sue Moon and I enjoyed leading a walk requested by Nottinghamshire's 3rd Woodthorpe Scouts in Peel last year, on the evening of Friday 5th August. Bob and Sue's greyhound, Oscar, joined us and was a talking point for the children.

The evening started with a short informative talk by Bob to the scouts, which raised lots of questions, including what part the dog played! We explained the dog wasn't used to search for bats but was just along for the walk – it was quite amusing!

The scouts were given their own bat detectors and hi-viz vests, and then we set off down the old railway line, and eventually a lone bat could be detected. It was perfect weather for seeing bats. We went further on into the trees by the riverside, where there were more bats, and we stopped to watch them as it was still quite light.

We then made our way further down to Glenfaba Bridge, which was a great place

to see bats as they were feeding on the insects by the water. A torch was shone across the water so the scouts could clearly see all the activity. We spent quite a while there as it was such a good place to watch. A lot of the children had never seen bats before and seemed fascinated by the display going on before them.

It was then time to turn back towards Peel. The scouts all had an enjoyable evening, as did we.

The scout group owns a campsite in Nottingham called The Pepperpots. Under the site is a disused railway tunnel with two ventilation shafts known as pepperpots, hence the name. The tunnel and the shaft have many bats and scout leader Mike Smith says they quite often watch them flying around the trees.

There are some more pictures of the site at the link below.

<http://3wscouts.org.uk/pepperpots.html>

**Gina Shelley**



*The Pepperpots, home of the 3rd Woodthorpe Scout Group*

## MNH heritage open evening in Laxey

Bat Group members were pleased to lead a bat walk in Laxey on 8th October 2011 as part of Manx National Heritage's programme of open day events.

A sizeable group of would-be bat hunters, both adults and children, gathered firstly at the Lady Isabella wheel, where Kate Hawkins introduced the evening and Bob Moon then gave a short introductory talk on bats.

Everyone was issued with the obligatory high-visibility Manx Bat Group vest and the bat detectors were shared around the group. After some instruction from Bob, we were ready to head off on our quest.

Some of us heard a brief call from a bat passing over the car park, but apart from that it was pretty quiet, so we headed off down the glen, first stopping to check for signs of bat activity at the pond behind the old engineering works—usually a good place to find Daubenton's bats skimming the surface of the water for insects.

The activity really hotted up though when we reached the Washing Floors

beside the Snaefell Wheel. We heard and saw lots of pipistrelle bats feeding above the water in front of the tunnel that goes under the road.

For some of the group this was their first encounter with bats, and they were thrilled not only to hear them on the detectors, but especially to see them silhouetted against the street lamps and the just light enough sky.

The younger members of the group took great delight in listening for the feeding buzzes made by the bats when they caught insects – which sound like bats blowing rude raspberries!

After the event we had a lovely message of thanks from Kate, who added:

'Bat detecting is definitely a popular children and family activity and a good one for seeding interest in natural history and the environment. I am increasingly impressed with the MBG's work in informing people about bat biology and conservation and getting the message across to the community at large.'

**Margaret Hunter**

*The Snaefell  
Wheel on Laxey  
Washing Floors  
(Wikipedia)*





## Bats blitzed at the Raggatt

A bat walk with plenty of interest kicked off the BioBlitz at the Raggatt in August. This involved both the public and specialists in searching for as many species as possible within 24 hours, blitzing an area with many different methods to get a snapshot of the wildlife on the site, whilst showing the public the wide range of species that they may not notice in their everyday life.

This is the first year that this approach has been attempted on the Isle of Man, and it was organised by the Department of Environment, Food and Agriculture and the western group of the Manx Wildlife Trust, with sponsorship from Colas.

The bat section was organised and run by the Manx Bat Group and your DEFA rep. A sizeable group of people walked the riverside and the Steam Heritage Trail at dusk. First spotted were Leisler's bats feeding over our heads and the adjacent fields, along the riverside path, close to the redeveloped weir. An occasional

common pipistrelle flew overhead on the paths, and a brown long-eared bat was spotted near the footbridge, but the highlight of the night was definitely watching Daubenton's bats gaffing insects from the weirhead pool in torchlight. The more nocturnal blitzers then headed for the Knockaloe classroom for a cup of tea and a meeting with a brown long-eared bat that was in care but in good condition. Fascinated eyes watched as Bob Moon fed his charge and talked about the life of long-eared bats on the island.

Next day there was more action for those with a broad interest. A moth trap was emptied, bushes were knocked and searched and the invertebrates identified back at the tent, where microscopes were set up. There was netting in the river and surveys of plants and fungi. The day closed with another highlight, electro-fishing in the river, which attracted a crowd who watched as salmon, trout, eel and even brook lamprey were brought out for a closer inspection. Overall about 300 species were identified.

**Richard Selman**



*Bob Moon showing some BioBlitz volunteers a brown long-eared bat*



## Bats and Belles

In the summer of 2011, I was invited to the belfry of the Peel Belles, a WI group, to chat about bats. We met at the Peel Golf Club and went through the usual bat facts on the Manx species.

As luck would have it, I also happened to have a bat in care that had fared very well and was due for release. This was therefore a wonderful opportunity for bat meets WI and WI meets bat, face to face. This is always a fabulous and memorable moment for those not so lucky to get close to these mysterious creatures due to their secretive habits.

It was also a lovely summer evening so a group of us decided to have a bat walk around the adjacent parts of the course. Initially, all was quiet, but then a Leisler's bat was spotted circling close to the car park, providing some great views of it foraging, followed by some common pipistrelles detected along the back of the houses.

Spotting wild, flying bats was a nice finish to an evening of bat experiences.

**Richard Selman**

## Forget the belfry – Israel has bats in the bunkers!



On the Israeli border with Jordan, abandoned army bunkers have now become luxury accommodation for many thousands of bats. Twelve indigenous species now live, and indeed thrive, there. They formerly inhabited caves and ruins, which have since been destroyed by human activities.

All are endangered and two of the species present, the Mediterranean horseshoe bat and Geoffroy's bat, are considered to be critically endangered. All 12 species are insect eaters and provide valuable pest control for local farms.

Tel Aviv University researchers have been granted special permission to study the bats. They have also modified the bunkers to suit the needs of the bats, adding old telephone cables, mesh sheets and wooden pallets. The general public are kept well away as the area is an abandoned minefield and is off limits.

You can see a short video of the bat bunkers on the BBC website:

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-16768989>

**Shem Allanson**



## Encounter with Noctules

Sue and I were fortunate enough to spend two weeks last summer in the beautiful island of Corsica. The locals are justifiably proud of their island, and as a holiday destination it is hard to beat. The cuisine is divine, the sea is crystal clear, the beaches immaculate and, in June, uncrowded. The dramatic mountain scenery is stunning, and everywhere there is the heady, herby smell of the maquis. And it has bats – lots of them!

Twenty-two species of bat inhabit this island, which is about nine times the size of the Isle of Man. Six out of our seven species are present, along with many we would not recognise, including a number of North African species and three species of horseshoe bat. There are two noctule species: the first is Leisler's bat, so familiar to us in IOM, and the other is one of Europe's rarest bat species – the Greater Noctule. As we were soon to discover, it is doing rather well in southern Corsica.

The Greater, or 'Giant', Noctule is very much larger than our native Leisler's bat. Weighing in at a hefty 50g it is three to four times heavier than its Manx cousin and has a wingspan of around 18 inches. The aspect that has earned this bat some notoriety, however, is its diet: it has a fondness for eating birds, which it hunts on the wing. At the times of the year when songbirds are migrating in southern Europe, 80 per cent or more of its diet can consist of birds. At other times it eats similar insect types to the Leisler's bat.

One evening, just as the sun was setting but before the light failed, I saw something fly past us very fast at shoulder height in a narrow lane and then switch direction suddenly around the edge of a wall. It was



only as I saw it turn that I realised what I had thought was a bird was in fact a bat. It reminded me of the way a sparrowhawk flies when it wants to catch garden birds by surprise. I think this was my first encounter with the Greater Noctule. On other evenings we would watch a single large noctule from a distance of 100 yards away hunting insects just above the tree line, silhouetted against the setting sun. It would fly strongly backwards and forwards and hunt in the same area for around 10 to 15 minutes.

Do they ever take other bats? Internet searches have failed to find any records to suggest that they do, however I did see evidence that other bats give this species a wide berth. I was listening with my bat detector one night to about four pipistrelles that were foraging around a clearing in some trees. Some of the pips were uttering social calls and there was a blizzard of bat sound that was suddenly eclipsed by a very loud noctule-type 'chip-chop' pattern. I never saw the newcomer on the scene, but the noctule made three rapid passes before moving off.

There was silence, broken only by the stridulations of the crickets. The pipistrelles, so active moments before, had all left suddenly – but why?

**Bob Moon**



## Bat box making, 11th February 2012

The Bat Group teamed up with Manx Wildlife Trust in February to participate in a Winter Woodland Workshop.

The Trust laid on demonstrations of making charcoal, willow and hazel hurdles and riverbank restraints, besoms (or a rather nifty Nimbus 2000\* as one participant dubbed hers), and led a busy workshop on making bird boxes.

We engaged a good number of young (and some not so young) volunteers in making bat boxes, which most people decided to buy and take home to encourage more bats in their own neighbourhoods.

Here are a selection of photos (taken by me and Richard Fryer) of the box makers. The children were especially keen to get their hands on the hammers and power drills, though there were a few parents who seemed to enjoy giving the hammer a good thwack too!

There are more photos on the Bat Group website. If you'd like to make a bat box yourself, we used the Kent Bat Group's model. Instructions are at: <http://new.kentbatgroup.org.uk/?page=whatwedo.html>

**Margaret Hunter**



*Fenn enjoying using the hammer*



*A proud Fenn with his finished bat box*



*Megan was very keen to get started!*



*A simple but effective bat box design*



*Isla gets stuck in with the drill*



*The completed bird and bat boxes*



*Ewan was a bit young for drilling (but wanted to!)*



*Matthew was very handy with the tools*



*Dads were encouraged to join in too*



*... and mums!*

*\* Nimbus 2000 – that's Harry Potter's broomstick, if you didn't know!*



## White nose syndrome

Concern continues over a crash in hibernating bat populations at major roosts in the east of the United States. The cause has been confirmed as infection by the soil fungus *Geomyces destructans* and mass die-offs are spreading westwards. European researchers are interested in finding out whether this fungus is present in bat populations here and, if so, whether there is a similar risk to European bats. Recent research has identified this fungus in bats in at least eight European countries but the syndrome of mass bat deaths has not been found. It is therefore possible that the fungus originates in Europe and that the bats have evolved resistance to it, which may be lacking in American bats, though this is speculative at this stage.

www.bats.org



In Britain, 22 bats with suspect symptoms have all tested negative for the conidia of this fungus. There is therefore no evidence yet for the presence of this fungus in British bats, but this is not conclusive. Research is still at an early stage, so anyone working underground

who sees a live or dead bat with a white fungus on its nose or skin lesions on the wings during hibernation should refer to the procedures in the guidance provided on the Bat Conservation Trust website.

The BCT site has just been updated with the current distribution of the fungus in the US and Europe, symptoms in bats, good practice for hibernation site visits, and updated sampling procedures and forms. Hibernation roost checks are undertaken by licensed workers, who should now disinfect between sites and stay alert for the presence of this fungus, taking a sample where suspected.

[www.batcon.org](http://www.batcon.org) and [www.bats.org.uk](http://www.bats.org.uk)  
(the Guidelines and links to scientific articles)

**Richard Selman**

## IOM site designations

DEFA completed two site designations in 2011, despite the recent hiccup with Ramsey Estuary, and hopes to continue the programme in 2012/13. Areas of Special Scientific Interest were designated at Port St Mary Ledges and Kallow Point, and at Maughold Broughs. Though these are exposed sites, the designation discussions for Maughold brought to light that bats had historically been recorded in the mines many years ago when a boy went down a shaft on ropes. We don't know where most of our bats go in winter but sites like this have great potential.

Maughold was designated for its breeding seabirds, cliffs and grassland, Port St Mary Ledges (Kallow Point) for its complex of maritime habitats, including intertidal limestone ledges. This is considered to be one of the best rocky shores in the British Isles for ecological studies, having a long history of research,

and is a monitoring site for the impact of climate change on rocky shores.

We would be very interested to hear of any bat records at any of the ASSIs, but please get the landowner's permission if you wish to go off the rights of way. Details of the full list of sites are to be provided on the Department's website shortly.

**Richard Selman**

## Our new BCT trustee



www.bats.org

As a Partner Group of the Bat Conservation Trust, we recently voted to elect a new BCT partner-nominated trustee. We voted for Tom McOwat, who is a wildlife artist, bat worker and longstanding member of the North Ceredigion Bat Group in Wales.

We are pleased to report that Tom was duly elected and he is now working with BCT to represent local bat groups.

Tom's involvement with bats began when he met the young Bob Stebbings, who was studying pipistrelles on the Isle of Rhum, and Tom soon became hooked. BCT says one of Tom's trainees described him as a 'walking book on bats' who 'seems to be able to remember immense details on a piece of bat scientific research or information on bats and tells it with such enthusiasm that it is captivating...'.

## Bats at the Paralympics!



Keep an eagle eye out for 'The Bats' this upcoming London 2012 Paralympics! Argentina's Bat Conservation Programme (PCMA) and Argentina's Blind Sport Federation (FADEC) have come together to celebrate bat conservation during 2012.

The members of the National B1 indoor football team will be known worldwide as 'The Bats' and will be acting as ambassadors for Argentinian bats and the need for global bat conservation.

The Bats have qualified for a place at the 2012 London Paralympic Games.

## Bats, Camera, Action!

The Year of the Bat Photo Contest was successfully concluded in October. The judges included Merlin D. Tuttle and Julia Hanmer of BCT. The results were announced at the North American Symposium on Bat Research (NASBR) on 28th October 2011. You can see all the submissions and the winning entries at: [http://www.eurobats.org/YoB\\_photo\\_index.htm](http://www.eurobats.org/YoB_photo_index.htm)

The Bats and photo competition stories are from the Year of the Bat newsletter: <http://www.yearofthebat.org/newsletters/yob-chat-3/>



## Committee round up

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 and usually meets monthly. Conscious that ordinary Group members may wonder what goes on, here's a round-up of some of the tasks the committee has dealt with recently.

### Awareness-raising

The Bat Group had stalls at the Tynwald Day Fair and the Southern Agricultural Show last year, which both proved to be great opportunities to engage the public in discussion about bats and their conservation. We gave away lots of information leaflets and sold lots of bat goodies, including some bat socks!

### Bat surveys

We continue to respond to requests for bat surveys at properties subject to planning proposals. We always need more volunteers to help, so let us know if you are interested. You don't need any specific knowledge or experience.

### Year of the Bat project – Bat Search

We have continued to plan for a big island-wide bat project as part of our contribution to the Year of the Bat. See page 3 of this newsletter for more information.

### Bat Group resources

After a recent committee meeting some members stayed on to sort through the mass of paperwork and resources passed on by Dennis and Anne Blackwell when they left the island. Our aim is to write up a history of the Group (in time for our

25th birthday in 2015?) and to collate resources such as bat activities and training information and identify which of these we can make more widely available for borrowing.

If you have photos that we can scan, stories of bat encounters or bat events, or anything else relating to the history of the Manx Bat Group that you'd like to share with us then please let us know ([info@manxbatgroup.org](mailto:info@manxbatgroup.org)).

### Bat walks and talks

We regularly get requests from schools and youth and community groups to lead bat-related activities. Recent examples include songs, games and crafts with the children at Ballaquayle School and Scoill Phurt le Moirrey; a bat quiz and balloon bat-making with Marown Beavers; a talk and walk with Peel Belles WI; bat puppets and a slideshow with Onchan Brownies; a bat walk for a visiting group of Scouts; and a bat walk for Manx National Heritage.

### Bat information

We are starting a project to review and update all of our bat information leaflets. The current short information leaflets series includes:

- Manx bats
- Prey and predators
- Manx bats and the law
- Bat detectors
- The natural history of bats
- The care of injured bats

If you have any good ideas for other subjects you'd like to see us provide information on, or would like to volunteer to write something, please let us know.



## Just for fun!

## Find 7 Manx bats

Bats can be hard to see at night.  
See if you can find them in the grid below.



Put a ring around the answers in the grid:

Brown long-eared

Pipistrelle

Soprano

Natterer's

Daubenton's

Whiskered

Leisler's

# ACTION FORM

Please let us know if you can help with any Bat Group activities by posting or emailing the action form below.



You can also use the form to request leaflets, let us know your email address so we can tell you about events etc in between newsletters, and request registration on the Bat Group website so that you can submit news stories and bat records online. We will in future also be developing a section of the website for members only, so make sure you don't miss out!

	Please send me a <b>membership form</b> .
	Please send me an <b><i>Isle of Man Bat Walks</i></b> booklet.
	Please send me a <b><i>Bats of the Isle of Man</i></b> leaflet.
	Please <b>register me on the Manx Bat Group website</b> using the email address below.
	Please <b>send me occasional Manx Bat Group notices</b> using the email address below.
	I am interested in <b>training</b> to become a licensed bat worker.
	I would like to help with <b>bat surveys</b> (no experience necessary).
	I would like to help with <b>roost checks</b> (no experience necessary).
	I would like to get involved with the <b>Bat Search</b> project.

Your Name			
Address			
Tel no		Email	
<b>Please return to:</b> Manx Bat Group, 4 Oxford Street, Douglas, IM1 3JF or scan and email to <a href="mailto:info@manxbatgroup.org">info@manxbatgroup.org</a>			

## Bat events 2012

Everyone is welcome to our regular bat walks and activities. You don't need to be a member (but we'd love you to join!):

### Bat walks

- **12th May, 9.00pm**  
Mooragh Park, Ramsey  
(meet at car park near the Rugby Club)
- **16th June, 9.45pm**  
Summerhill Glen, Douglas  
(top gate on Victoria Road)
- **7th July, 9.45pm**  
Peel to the Raggatt  
(car park behind House of Manannan)
- **25th August, 8.15pm**  
Silverdale Glen  
(at the pond/shop area)

### Bat Search

Our big bat monitoring project will be running throughout the summer. Ask for an information pack now and sign up as a volunteer Bat Searcher!

### Other events for your diary

- **14th April**, open day to learn how to use bat detectors and understand ultrasound. Venue and time TBA.
- **25th August**, Bat Group members' annual barbecue for European Bat Night. Silverdale Glen 6.30pm.
- **14th–16th September**, the annual National Bat Conference, Bat Conservation Trust, York University. Booking and details at:

[http://www.bats.org.uk/pages/national\\_bat\\_conference.html](http://www.bats.org.uk/pages/national_bat_conference.html)

