



## Chairman's Chat

As it is ages since I wrote the last Chairman's chat, a lot has happened ! After a busy winter of analysing last summer's bat detector recordings and hibernation checks, we're gearing up for the 2018 survey season. I hope that many of you, particularly our new members, will take the opportunity to join in the fun and learn more about bats.

By the time you read this, SBG will have taken an active role in the Suffolk Mammal Conference – organised by Suffolk Naturalists Society and Suffolk Mammal Group; our county bat recorder Alan Miller is giving a presentation on the First 35 years of Suffolk Bat Group and we will take a display on our new Bat Atlas. I hope you will all have Thursday 12 April on your calendar for our AGM – anyone interested in getting more involved please come along to find out what your Committee do. Our guest speaker this year will be Sarah Mackinnon who will be telling us about habitat selection by Barbastelle bats, from her work on the STANTA battle area in the Norfolk Brecks. I'm still jealous she got to do her MSc on Barbies and when she gave this talk to Essex BG last month, it was standing room only!

This is also a handy time for me to remind everyone that membership renewals will be due in April - we run this from the AGM not on the anniversary of joining - and please set up a payment with your bank or online so you don't forget. I have asked Alan to send out a Standing Order form with this newsletter and look forward to hearing of lots of renewals before the SBG mailing list gets a Spring clean.

As usual, our survey co-ordinator Arthur Rivett will be organising some Group bat detector surveys for 2018, with sites on both sides of the county already on the list but if you know of somewhere worth a bat survey, please let us know. Last year we visited a range of locations - SWT Captains' Wood near the coast, Nowton Park in Bury St Edmunds at the invitation of the St Edmundsbury BC rangers, Center Parcs Elveden and SWT Blackbourne Valley, near Ixworth and the end of the summer, we surveyed the restored landfill site at Lackford again - after a day of thunderstorms but the bats came out to play ! These group events are a great opportunity to learn more about bat detecting – we provide equipment and training so there's no need to feel shy about booking a place. We also fixed up some joint surveys with Essex Bat Group last summer at Alton Water reservoir near Ipswich under the National Nathusius' Pipistrelle Project – do read Nathan's article elsewhere. These were a fabulous opportunity to build on SBG surveys that have recorded these rare bats at this site and actually see Nathusius' Pipistrelle in the hand – they're much bigger than Common or Soprano Pips being measured as "3 fingers long" rather than 2 !

SBG led a long list of bat walks last year so many thanks go to Duncan, Mark, Dennis & Anne with help also from Steve & Tarra who volunteered to help out with these events. Anyone willing to help out on bat walks this year, please let me know – extra hands are always welcome and you won't be thrown in the deep end as leader! At the invitation of our parent body Suffolk Wildlife Trust, I took a day off work to run a SBG stand at the Suffolk Show last year with the theme of homes for wildlife – maybe you visited the trail around the wildlife area ? It was great fun and we ran out of leaflets about making a bat box so I hope lots of new homes for bats have been made since & are now ready for new residents after bats emerge from their hibernation.

It is always good to read articles from SBG members so if you haven't contributed to this edition of Pipspeak, please consider this for next time and make our Editor Luci very happy ! I hope you enjoy reading what SBG members have been up since the last newsletter.

Sue Hooton

## Essex Bat Group Sound Analysis Workshop

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As I'm now working in Essex, I have also joined Essex Bat Group and took the opportunity to book a place on their Sound Analysis workshop in January.

This event was a continuation of the workshops they have been running to look at the bat calls generated as part of their Woodland Bat Project. This event was aimed at those with some experience at sound analysis rather than beginners and although most attendees had a variety of knowledge, no-one thought of themselves as experts – we were all still learning the art ! It was an informal and interactive session allowing attendees the chance to analyse calls using BatClassify and sound analysis software such as Bat Explorer / Bat Sound. Essex BG have several static (Batlogger) detectors and these are deployed at various sites across the county.

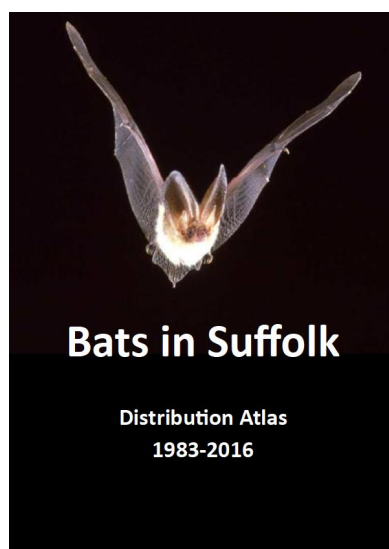
After a very useful tutorial, we were all given a folder of calls to look at using whatever sound analysis software we had on our laptops – which had been put through BatClassify. This free Auto ID software is used to classify bat call recordings in batches to provide a first level sort i.e. auto-classification with 'suggested' species identification. With the classification results in a spreadsheet, we began to examine the bat calls in detail by looking at those with at least 85% certainty of correct auto-ID. BatClassify software does much of the analysis for you but it is essential make your own judgements. Software analysis is often incorrect and you need to be able to determine when this is the case.

I was keen to try out Bat Explorer so had downloaded this (free) in advance and used this to analyse the bat calls from one of the woods surveyed. It took a bit of getting used to but I found I liked it and am keen Suffolk BG try it out and compare with Anlook for our static detector sound analysis.

The key message I took away was if a particular call is not characteristic and fairly easily identified – “walk away” and look at the next one ! The aim is confirmation of ID of a species for a site, not every bat call, and I thoroughly enjoyed the camaraderie and even took some call files for homework afterwards ! Many were logged as “walk away” but I was pleased to confirm ID of calls for both Noctule and Leisler's – to add to records of Barbastelle, Common and Soprano Pipistrelles for the site. I've asked for and just been sent another two folders so I hooked now !

Many thanks to Essex Bat Group, particularly Graham Hart, Pat Hatch, Andrew Palmer, Tim Sapsford and Jennifer Wrayton, for a very friendly workshop – it's always good to share knowledge & skills !

Sue Hooton



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### Suffolk Bat Atlas 1983-2016

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If you didn't manage to get to the November Survey Results evening and buy a paper copy of the new Suffolk Bat Atlas (limited print run), do get in touch with Alan £5 plus p&p. We will upload the pdf to the SBG webpage soon.

## Nathusius Pipistrelle Harp Trapping

In partnership with the Essex Bat Group, the first of four harp trapping sessions was undertaken on the 13<sup>th</sup> May 2017 as part of the National Nathusius' Pipistrelle Project at Alton Water reservoir. Under the national project licence, two harp traps were set up, with a Nathusius' pipistrelle call played on a lure at two second intervals.

Suffolk Bat Group had recorded Nathusius' Pipistrelles foraging over Alton Water in the August 2012 survey and at the nearby Royal Hospital School in the September 2015 survey. This site was therefore a great choice, not just because it is near the Essex border, and we were all hopeful of a successful session.

A total of six bats were caught within the two hour survey period – one common Pipistrelle, one soprano Pipistrelle and four Nathusius' Pipistrelles. Identification features involved the size of the bat, the ratio between the fifth finger and forearm being greater than 1.25, a circular fringe of white hairs around the penis and wing venation. Getting this checked under torchlight and recorded was not easy but thanks to Pat Hatch from Essex Bat Group, all four Nathusius' Pipistrelles were ringed to allow identification if caught during future sessions.

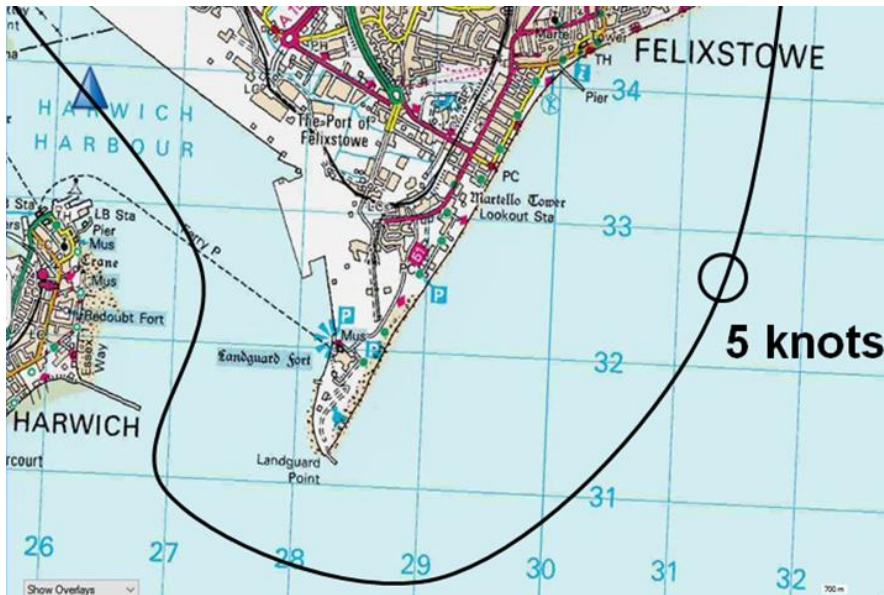
Many thanks to Anglian Water for permission to survey and John Glazebrook from Alton Water volunteers for his assistance on the night. Thank you also to all of those who attended and let's hope the remaining visits this year are just as successful.

Nathan Duszynski



## A Bat in the Rigging

On hibernation surveys, roost visits and quite a few years ago as an RSPCA Inspector, I have come across bats in some unexpected places. However, nothing prepared us for the surprise that unfolded on an overcast Monday morning last autumn.



It was around 0745 on 25<sup>th</sup> September 2017, about an hour and a half after first light and we had been on a cruise to Woodbridge over the weekend. On Sunday evening, we had picked up a buoy for the night at Ramsholt and enjoyed watching the sun set aboard our small sailing boat *Redshank*, whilst the geese and waders fed noisily on the exposed mud around us. We left just before dawn to catch the tide across the shallow Deben Bar before heading home to Woolverstone on the River Orwell.

At 0745 we were sailing about 2km off Felixstowe beach, just past the pier. It was cloudy but with good visibility and a light SE breeze of about force 3. Anne was helming and I was below when she called,

“Come up here on deck, Quick!”

I followed her arm and although it took a few moments, I saw what she had spotted. Quite a large bat was circling the top of the mast, swooping down beside the sail and flying up toward the masthead. We watched it for a few minutes before realising that it was trying to land. I had time to find the camera and shoot a lot of pictures, but capturing a bat in flight twelve and a half metres above our heads from a moving platform proved almost impossible.



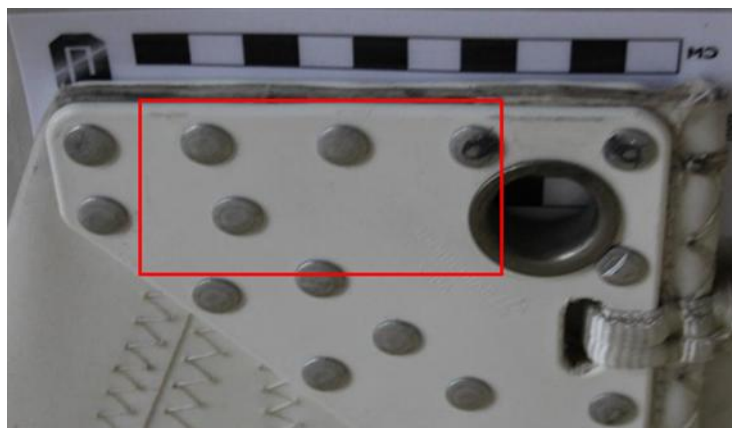
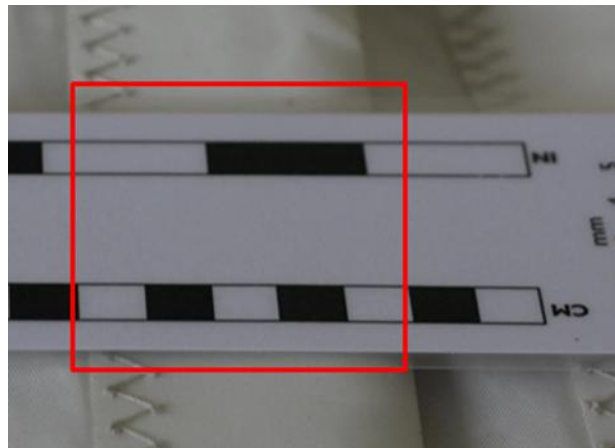
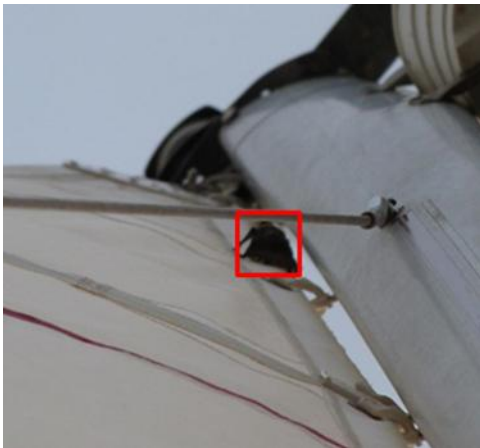
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Eventually, the bat managed to land on the edge of the mainsail next to the mast. From here, it climbed up to the top, using the stitching in the sailcloth to grip. At the top, it turned through 90 degrees and lay along the very top plate of the sail and appeared to settle here, roosting.

We are not sure how long it stayed there. Certainly, we were aware that it had moved or flown off later in the morning. We lowered the sail very carefully, but found no evidence of its visit and as far as we can judge, there was no way it could have crawled into the mast itself.

We are not sure about the species, but with the sail now removed from *Redshank* for the winter, we can estimate measurements as shown in the photographs. Neither are we sure whether the bat had flown offshore from Felixstowe or was trying to make land having flown across the Thames Estuary. It may have been hitch-hiking on another vessel. Many visiting yachts come across the North Sea or from France. Ipswich, Harwich and Felixstowe are very busy international ports.



I guess we shall never know who our bat was, where it came from or where it went next. But it is certainly an unusual encounter.

Dennis and Anne Kell



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## About the Suffolk Bat Group

The Suffolk Bat Group is a group of the Suffolk Wildlife Trust (a county-based charity, working for the benefit of wildlife and habitats in Suffolk). Our Group is active in promoting bat conservation in Suffolk, including surveys, advice, assisting Natural England, and safeguarding roosts.

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## Articles Needed

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Your editor needs you! Please let me know if you have any articles or thoughts for the next edition of Pipspeak—we love participation from all of our

members!

My email address is above.

- Ed

## Find us online!

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Facebook: [www.facebook.com/SuffolkBatGroup](https://www.facebook.com/SuffolkBatGroup) - we now have nearly 700 likes so keep spreading the word!



Twitter: [twitter.com/SuffolkBatGroup](https://twitter.com/SuffolkBatGroup)

## BCT's helpline number

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Please note that the Bat Conservation Trust has a new helpline phone number: **0345 1300 228**

Bat Conservation Trust

