



## Chairman's Chat

Apologies for a huge gap in news – 2018 was busy for lots of different reasons but I'm keen for you to catch up on what Suffolk Bat Group members got up last season.

Top of my list are congratulations to some key SBG volunteers – Luci Coyne (nee Spencer) (Pipspeak editor) got married last summer to Pete, James Booty got his Volunteer Bat Roost Visitor licence & took on a patch of the county as part of the Suffolk team carrying out householder visits on behalf of Natural England, Mark Smith now has his survey licence and Nathan Duszynski for successfully securing £3,500 funding towards our harp trap project – read more elsewhere in this edition of Pipspeak.

Thanks also to Dennis & Anne Kell for giving excellent bat talks last year - these have such a great reputation now that they get requests from all across the county; we need more members to minimise travelling so if you're willing to give talks & like the idea of doing so for SBG, please get in touch!

SBG led a long list of bat walks last year so many thanks go to Bill Landells, Duncan Sweeting, Mark Smith, Simone Bullion, Dennis & Anne with help also from Steve Pease, Chris Budd & Tarra Benjamin who volunteered to support 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. The medal for 2018 must go to Simone who led a bat walk for 70 St Johns Ambulance cadets from Essex camping at Nacton & they all had a great evening!

Our AGM last year in April had a last minute change as our guest speaker lost their voice due to tonsillitis and Alan Miller (as County bat recorder) stepped in with yours truly, to give members not one but two talks, which we had given in the previous months at Suffolk Naturalists Society and regional Bat Conservation Trust conferences. The officers elected were myself (re-elected) as Chairperson, Alan Miller (re-elected) as Treasurer and James Meyer elected as Secretary (he is also our website editor) who following GDPR requirements, now has the responsibility of SBG membership too! The rest of the SBG Committee were happy to continue so thanks to Arthur Rivett (Survey co-ordinator & VBRV licensed trainer), Luci Coyne (Pipspeak editor), Duncan Sweeting (Ladder trainer), Claire Branch (NBMP co-ordinator).

The Thetford Forest bat box monitoring project had the usual April and October checks, with lower numbers of Brown Long-eared bats probably due to the mild winter of 2017/18. Thanks to Neal Armour-Chelu at Forestry Commission for ensuring all our climbing gear & ladders had their certificates updated and SBG members with licences taking it in turns to safely take bats out of the boxes for processing. As these events are for SBG members only, please let Arthur Rivett know when the booking details are circulated as there are limited places to see bats close up. If you have up to date rabies vaccinations, you can handle bats but otherwise you can help with carrying ladders, recording details of

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## Chairman Chat—continued

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bats on the monitoring sheets and enjoying being part of the team spending a day in the forest!

For 2018, SBG was invited to visit a range of locations for our Group surveys – Rougham Estate near Bury St Edmunds, several neighbouring landowners at Bramfield near Halesworth, Somerleyton Estate near Lowestoft and SWT Arger Fen (Hullback's Grove) near Sudbury. SBG group surveys 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. If you've not helped out before, all volunteers are allocated a pre-identified batty location for a 1.5 hours survey, using a Duet bat detector with a digital recorder for analysis of sound files later. We try to buddy up anyone new with a more experienced surveyor to help identify batty sights at dusk and sounds in the dark! As usual, our survey co-ordinator Arthur Rivett will be organising some Group bat detector surveys for 2019, 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. We were short of surveyors on most Group surveys in 2018 so when the email arrives this year, please put the dates in your diaries and let Arthur know which surveys you can help with – your involvement is key to collecting important data for our atlas and the landowner as they are all keen to manage their woodland for bats. If we don't know we have enough surveyors to go ahead with any surveys, we may have to cancel!

After a busy winter of analysing last summer's bat detector recordings and hibernation checks, we're now gearing up for the 2019 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.

We have now fixed 4<sup>th</sup> April for our AGM for 2019 – so 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 a while ago, it was standing room only!

This is also a handy time for me to remind everyone that SBG 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 our Treasurer Alan Miller 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.

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.

Happy battling!

Sue

SBG Chairperson

# BCT statement on TLX Batsafe Roofing Membrane

Modern Roofing Membranes (formerly Breathable Roofing Membranes) currently are of a spun poly-bounded construction made up of long fibres, bats claws are sharp enough to pull these fibres loose, which entangle and ultimately kill bats.

BCT are aware there is a new roofing membrane on the market called TLX Batsafe which claims it is safe for use in bat roosts, however BCT has not seen test data to verify this. Therefore the original advice still stands, **currently the only 'bat safe' roofing membrane is bitumen 1F felt that is a non-woven short fibred construction.**

Sue Hooton

# Animals of the countryside collectors cards



When I was sorting through boxes at my parents' house recently, I came across some collectable cards from Player's cigarettes for Animals of the Countryside (issued in 1939 apparently) which included 4 bats. Unfortunately it is not a complete set of 50, but having checked this set out online, numbers 6-10 are bats – Lesser Horseshoe, Natterer's, Common bat (or Pipistrelle), Whiskered bat – and Great Bat (or Noctule) which was not in the bundle. The text for each bat is obviously a bit dated but I was delighted to see they made up 10% of the set and though they may only be worth 20p each on ebay, I thought I'd share photos of them.

Sue Hooton

## Putting UK bats on the map (PUKBoTM) project

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You may recall reading about how SBG was helping with this project in *Pipspeak* back in April 2017.....well this collaborative project between Bat Conservation Trust (BCT) and Forest Research has now come to an end and it has had some interesting initial results in Suffolk!

One aim of the PUKBoTM project was to predict current distributions of woodland bat species and hoped to understand how distributions and assemblages of bat species may change in the future. SBG was keen to be involved with this project and helped with the field work in 2017 and 2018. This has provided bat distribution data which can now be used to ground truth habitat suitability models and build on work to develop, test, critically assess and refine survey methods for systematic monitoring of bats in woodland.

Four target areas were identified for field work, with one in west Suffolk, each needing 2 surveys sites; in one deciduous woodland (National Trust Ickworth) and one coniferous woodland (Warren Wood, Forestry Commission Thetford Forest). SBG members Bill Landells, Alison Collins and Fiona Wells, walked transects carrying a 'gold-standard' detector (Pettersson M500 -384 USB Ultrasonic microphone recording to a tablet) and an industry-standard static detector (Wildlife Acoustics SM2). New generation low-cost acoustic sensors (Audiomoth) were also used in both woodland locations.

The survey protocol involved walking a circular transect comprising six, five-minute long 'stopping points' separated by sufficient walked sections to make up 90 minutes of survey time when walked at a steady pace. To compare this methodology to static survey approaches, volunteers deployed an Audiomoth at each of the six transect stopping points, and randomly selected three of the six stopping points at which to also deploy an SM2 detector. The static detectors were set to record from half an hour before sunset to half an hour after sunrise.

In each year, the plan was for acoustics surveys to be undertaken in each on five nights between May-September, giving ten nights of sampling in each woodland in total. BCT was keen to compare the sensitivity and specificity of a range of currently available auto-ID programmes using bat calls recorded in a variety of ideal and non-ideal situations, to establish the degree to which woodland bat species can be identified automatically.

Analysis of data gathered from acoustic surveys has now started by BCT using a semi-manual analysis procedure; data will first be analysed using the best available automatic call ID programme and will then be subject to manual checking to ensure accuracy in instances where automated identification is less reliable.

Sonia Reveley, Woodland Officer at BCT has emailed to say that whilst they did not have a full species list yet, there was a record for a very unexpected species. *"I have been busy analysing the data that the Bill and his amazing team of volunteers collected for the Putting UK Woodland bats on the map project. One of the recordings from Lownde Wood is showing a very interesting call - a Lesser Horseshoe (LHS) bat call. This call was recorded around 22:50 on the 19<sup>th</sup> of July 2018 on the Pettersson detector. The call was recorded while the surveyors were walking along the walk 6 section of the transect route."* She then checked back for other possible LHS calls and found another track on one of the Audiomoths with a call recorded on 24<sup>th</sup> of May at Point 4, but it is so faint and unclear that she discarded it. The Auto ID software gave this call a confidence index of 0 so she had

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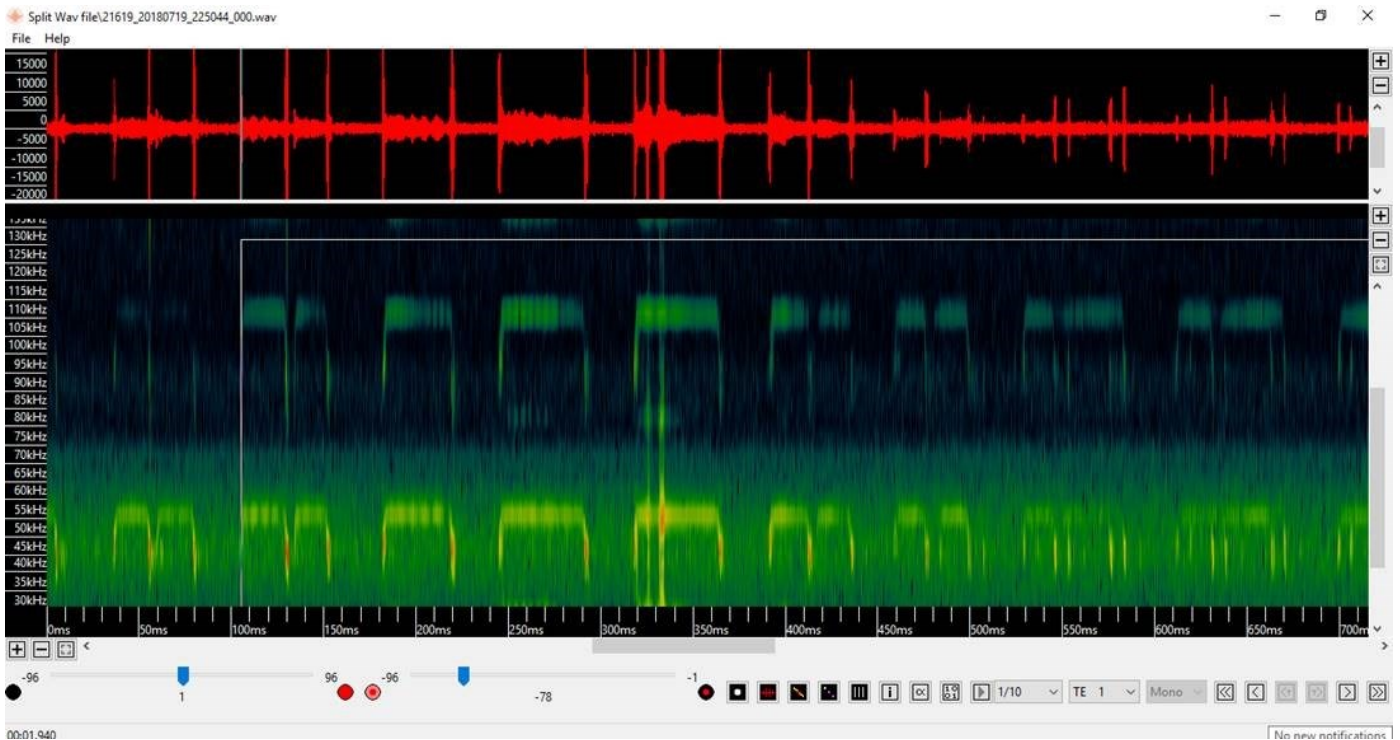
understandably originally discarded it.

Lesser horseshoe bats are now restricted to Wales and the south-west of England eastwards to Warwickshire. However Sonia knew that the Suffolk Bat Atlas includes a record for a single individual LHS in west Suffolk but this location is 20km from Ickworth. It seems highly unlikely to be the same bat, particularly as it was seen hibernating in exactly the same place for 20 years.....so SBG has a mystery to solve ! National Trust staff are happy for us to continue with static detector surveys this coming season at Ickworth to hopefully record Lesser Horseshoe bat again and maybe find out if this rare species has been “under the radar” in the county. The text in the Atlas is ironic – *“Studies have shown these bats rarely travel more than 15km between their roosts and so the appearance of one in Suffolk has always been intriguing. It is unknown whether it was a lost or displaced individual, or whether there is a small population existing somewhere in West Suffolk waiting to be discovered.”*

Many thanks to the survey volunteers who had no idea what their efforts would yield ! Watch this space for more news.

Sue Hooton

PS We’ve just had confirmation that consultants carrying out bat surveys for Scottish Power Renewables (East Anglia ONE North Offshore Windfarm onshore cable corridor) last summer also had a single pass of a Lesser Horseshoe recorded on a static detector !!! This was near Saxmundham on 29<sup>th</sup> July ..... have we all been missing these or have they altered their distribution ?



## Harp trapping—a new survey experience for SBG

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In 2017, the Suffolk Bat Group (SBG) worked in partnership with the Essex Bat Group (EBG) to conduct three bat survey sessions at Alton Water reservoir as part of the National Nathusius' Pipistrelle Project using two of their harp traps and their expertise (thanks Pat, Tim & Sarah!). Harp traps allow bats to be caught in flight without becoming entangled within a net. The strings on the harp trap cause bats to turn perpendicular to the ground to avoid one set of string but obstruct them when they correct their angle back to normal, causing them to close their wings and fall unharmed into a collection chamber. At Alton Water two harp traps were set up each time, with a Nathusius' pipistrelle call played on a lure at two second intervals to attract bats.

Three trapping sessions were conducted on the 13<sup>th</sup> May and the 9<sup>th</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2017. The bats caught were identified using a range of features including their general size, colour, forearm length, fifth finger length, weight, wing venation and many more.

Across the three sessions a total of 60 bats and five species were caught, including common pipistrelle, soprano pipistrelle, Nathusius' pipistrelle, Daubenton's and brown long-eared bat. The 16 Nathusius' bats were all ringed for conservation monitoring purposes by Pat Hatch from EBG. Nathusius' pipistrelle can be identified from other pipistrelle species by their size (often referred to as a 3 finger pip), the ratio between the fifth finger and forearm being greater than 1.25, a circular fringe of white hairs around the penis and their wing venation.

In order to continue harp trapping and to provide members with the opportunity to handle bats on a more regular basis, SBG is fundraising to purchase the necessary equipment. Harp traps and acoustic lures are expensive to buy but require little upkeep. Since 2017, we have managed to secure a total of £3,500 so far thanks to the Aviva Community Fund, Essex & Suffolk Water, Suffolk Biodiversity Project Fund, Suffolk Naturalists Society bursary and member donations. We've also applied for a further £2,000 through the Dedham Vale & Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB Sustainability Fund. Although further fundraising is required, SBG Committee has agreed to allocate existing funds to those raised from grants to have at least one harp trap and lure ready for the start of the 2019 survey season. We aim to set the harp trap in new locations particularly wetlands

Thank you to all of those who attended the trapping sessions and helped fundraise. If you are interested in this project or would like to help fundraise, please contact Sue Hooton.

Nathan Duszynski



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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

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Facebook: [www.facebook.com/SuffolkBatGroup](https://www.facebook.com/SuffolkBatGroup) - we now have over 800 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** . This can answer your questions and concerns about bats and give you advice on grounded bats, building works and reporting bat crime.

Bat Conservation Trust

