



Wiltshire Bat Group Meeting 9 November 2023

Potterne Wick Scout Centre - 1900 – 2100

These notes have been put together for the benefit of those members not able to attend, and to provide a record of the discussions. They will be posted on the Wiltshire Mammal Portal web site. Any inaccuracies and omissions can be rectified at the next meeting.

Sticky Notices

- *If members want to get involved in our fieldwork and projects, then please email the [project leaders directly](#) and ask to go on their volunteer lists. Please be patient, some events get booked up quite quickly, and in line with national guidance [project leaders are necessarily restricting numbers and reducing exposure to bats](#). Email wiltsbqmembership@gmail.com and ask for current list.*
- *The Wiltshire Bat Group will continue to abide by all the guidance produced by the BCT, IUCN and Government scientists for reducing the risk of exposure of Sars Cov-2 (Covid-19) from the human population to bats. The BCT website has all the relevant information – www.bats.org.uk*
- *Bookmark the Wiltshire Mammal Portal in your web favourites – <https://wiltshiremammals.wordpress.com/wiltshire-bat-group>. You can read occasional news, our latest and archived annual Newsletters and previous meeting notes from the publication tab. We are also on the following social media platforms – Facebook [@wiltshirebatgroup](#), Twitter [@wiltsbg](#), Instagram – Wiltshire Bat Group and Wiltshire Bat Care*
- *We have 8 hand-held detectors that can be borrowed for events. You'll need to collect and drop off. Please email eventswbq@gmail.com for details.*
- *If you want a reminder about how to request funding for projects in Wiltshire from the WBG please email wwponting@gmail.com*
- *If you want assurance about how we protect your personal information please email wwponting@gmail.com and we'll send you our latest Data Protection information.*
- *Send your bat records to the county recorder at wiltbatrecords@gmail.com*
- *There is a comprehensive account of all Wiltshire's bat species in [mammals-in-wiltshire 2nd-edition](#) Updated in 2022/3. Free to download.*
- *Note: If you are reading these notes on the Wiltshire Mammal Portal, are a WBG member but don't receive updates by email from our Secretary, then please email wiltsbqmembership@gmail.com. You may be one of those members that we have no contact details for. And please remember to tell us if you change your email address at any time. Thanks!*

Will Ponting opened the meeting and welcomed everyone

- 32 members and guests attended the meeting
- Apologies were received from several members
- Will provided a bit of history for the group and highlighted some of the additional things that had been introduced including formally audited accounts, Newsletter, website and most importantly over 80,000 records in the database. It was stressed that submitting records was one of the most effective things individuals can do to support bat conservation in the county.

WBG Committee vacancies.

There was no formal voting. Voting for committee roles will be due in Spring 2024.

Kelly Sheldrick has officially stood down as Events Officer and the Committee would like to thank her for sterling work over the past few years in the role.

Will noted that the current committee was rather minimal and put out an appeal for help particularly for an Events Office, stressing how much more could be achieved for the wider membership if this role could be filled. He gave a general outline what that role could involve: Public engagement with individuals and organisations through events and social media, training of group members via talks or events. He stressed that all committee roles are voluntary and flexible depending on the abilities, interests and availability of those taking them on. (Subsequent to the meeting an Events Officer role description has been drawn up).

Will outlined how the Committee can support members particularly through small grants and detector loans.

Update from the Treasurer/Membership Officer – Will Ponting

Will gave his report on the year's financial activity.

Opening balance 1/3/22 - £6834

Income: - £6697

Expenditure: - £6539

Closing balance 28/2/23 - £6993

Reserve for 2023 - £4556

Unreserved funds for 2023 - £4556

Any questions can be addressed via email to the Treasurer.

In summary the WBG funds remain at a good level.

Small grants are available to members for bat survey work, DNA testing and other bat related activities. Any requests to be sent to The Treasurer. Will provided a quick summary of grants and donations made so far in 2023.

Debbie Harwood asked if funds might be available towards a Bat Cage at the Wiltshire Wildlife Hospital, Will said a contribution could certainly be available and asked Debbie to contact him directly.

Will reported that the bat group had 263 members which was healthy despite 44 non-renewals so far during the year.

Update on Events

As previously stated the Group is currently without an Events Officer. However, Will was able to report that Avon Bat Group have invited WBG members to join their series of Zoom Talks taking place over the Winter. Laura Loncar will be sending out information on these via email. On Facebook and on the Website.

Wiltshire's Best Bat Walks

The three winners of the Best Bat Walk's competition were announced:

Louise Hartgill – River Ebbles, Coombe Bissett

Bob Philpott – Jubilee Lake, Royal Wootton Bassett

Ben Welbourn – Cleveland Lakes, Cotswold Water Park

Bat Group Member and Graphic Designer, Richard Cassidy, will be putting together three walks leaflets which will be available online. And there will during the Spring and Summer of 2024 there will be Guided Walks set up at each location to launch the leaflets.

Update from the County Recorder – Gareth Harris

Gareth gave a brief run down of the highlights of bat work activity over the past few months. You can read the details of these projects on the Wiltshire Mammal Portal under the WBG publication tab. www.wiltshiremammals.wordpress.com.

1. 2023 was another productive field season for the Group's bat work; significant delivery in the Savernake Forest, Trowbridge Woodlands, Cotswold Water Park and South Wiltshire Greater Horseshoe Bat Project.
2. Ring movements of note include:
 - a. RSPB Franchises Lodge – new confirmed Bechstein's maternity colony & 30km ring movement of Bechstein's from Chilmark Quarries SSSI to New Forest. Thanks to Ian Davidson-Watts and Chris Diek for sharing this information.
 - b. Greater horseshoe bat, movement from Winsley Mine SSSI to Hilperton, Trowbridge.
 - c. Bechstein's bat, retrapped in Cotswold Water Park on same site as ringed in 2009.
3. Species of note:
 - a. Nathusius' pip recording bat box check in Cotswold Water Park again
 - b. Regular encounters of Barbastelle bat maternity group in Savernake Forest
4. Surveys of note:
 - a. Forestry England funded a Savernake-wide bat acoustic survey, to be followed in 2024 by more radiotracking studies
 - b. Bentley Wood Charitable Trust funded a large bat acoustic survey.
 - c. Woodland Trust commissioned further work at Avoncliff Wood, including static detector work and trapping surveys, which resulted in further captures of Barbastelle and Bechstein's bat.
 - d. Wylve Valley Farmer Group commissioned landscape-wide bat acoustic surveys.
 - e. Together these projects have resulted in considerable volumes of bat records for previously under-recorded areas.
5. South Wiltshire Greater Horseshoe Bat Project
 - a. A few more dung beetle surveys (records of over 11,000 beetles)
 - b. Bat house has now been colonised by GHS, mostly as a night roost/feeding perch, but also by Mnatt.
 - c. GHS recorded for first time at a small swarming site near Salisbury....
 - d. Chilmark & Fonthill et al (GH, LMW et al).
 - e. Acoustic surveys – commissioned to survey with Wylve Valley with the farmer group, generating data across 8 farms, especially for Bbar but also Rhipp, Rferr and Nathusius' pip! Pillboxes and landscape connectivity the next steps here.
 - f. The Cathedral – monitoring ongoing.

Members are encouraged to submit all bat records, via iRecord or our excel template recording form.

Fiona Mathews gave an outline of a new tool available online to bat workers the Horseshoe Bat Flight Line Predictor. Available from the Mammal Society via: <https://batdispersion.mammal.org.uk>

This system works by helping predict the probable routes bats may take in a landscape and therefore provide guidance on where to position recording devices.

AOB

Ben Mitchell has agreed to compile the spring 2024 Newsletter. Note: The Secretary has sent out an email to members asking for articles.

Refreshment Break

Talk: Fiona Mathews

After the break, Fiona Mathews gave an excellent talk introducing her new book, **Black Ops and Beaver Bombing**. Sharing insights into the challenges and chances for the future of some of Britain's most endangered mammals.

After talk there were questions from the floor then Will thanked Fiona and closed the meeting.

Wiltshire Bat Group Project leaders contact email		
<i>wiltsbgmembership@gmail.com</i>		
Your Committee		
The Chair	vacant	wiltsbg@gmail.com
WBG Secretary	Laura Loncar	wiltsbg@gmail.com
Treasurer and Membership	Will Ponting	wiltsbgmembership@gmail.com
County Recorder for Bats	Gareth Harris	wiltsbatrecords@gmail.com
Wiltshire Bat Care Coordinator	Caitlin McCann	wiltshirebatcare@gmail.com
BCT NBMP coordinator	vacant	NBMPWiltsbg@gmail.com
WBG Events coordinator	vacant	EventsWiltsbg@gmail.com

Wiltshire Bat Group Principles

- *Bat Group members should be champions and ambassadors for bat conservation raising the profile and public awareness of bats.*
- *Bat Group Members should promote and encourage data recording, forwarding their bat records to the Wiltshire Bat Group County Recorder.*
- *Experienced bat workers should provide training opportunities for the next generation of volunteers, including effective engagement with the public, safe handling, bat ID and surveying techniques.*
- *The Bat Group will establish and maintain effective partnerships with other bat groups, statutory bodies and conservation organisations.*
- *Bat Group Members should be courteous to each other, show respect, act with integrity at all times, communicate openly and adhere to the conditions of licences.*
- *Bat Group members should respect and adhere to National Guidelines relating to personal safety and bat welfare at all times.*
- *Bat group members engaging with, referencing or representing the Wiltshire Bat Group to the media should ensure they are delivering accurate, balanced and consistently professional messages aligned with the values of the group, and national bat conservation initiatives.*