



BAT PROJECT YEAR 4 NEWSLETTER

The Devon Greater Horseshoe Bat Project continues to be a great success, thanks to support from the National Lottery Heritage Fund.



This 5-year project works across Devon to secure the future of greater horseshoe bats in the county. Our priority areas are their 11 maternity roosts in Devon. It is vital that the countryside near these roosts provides everything these bats need to survive and raise healthy young for the next generation.

Why are we doing this?

The number of greater horseshoe bats has fallen by 90% in the UK during the last 100 years. They need countryside with good networks of hedges, woods, rivers and fields. This is why Devon is a last stronghold for them in the UK. However, even here threats are mounting.

Find out more and watch our project films at www.devonbatproject.org, where you can also subscribe to our regular newsletters. You can also follow us @devonbatproject on Twitter and Facebook and on Instagram at devon_bat_project



Devon
Wildlife Trust



HERITAGE
FUND

New Bat Roost in East Devon



Imagine our surprise when greater horseshoes started to use the new roost straight away!

New Bat Roost Success!

Thanks to our crowdfunder appeal, we have been able to create a new maternity roost for greater horseshoe bats at a secret location in East Devon, after a nearby roost had fallen into disrepair. The building was constructed from brick, with timber cladding and a slate roof. It was made to look as if it were just another agricultural building but contains a series of adaptations including special bat entrances and roosting chambers. Although specifically designed for greater horseshoe bats, the purpose-built roost can also accommodate other bat species. The roost would not have been possible without our partners at East Devon Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

Despite predictions that the bats would take time to discover their new home, everyone involved was delighted when, in a matter of days, they were found to be hanging out there!

New staff

Elinor - our new survey assistant



We welcome Elinor Parry who joined the bat team earlier this year as Devon Bat Survey assistant. If you've taken part in the survey this year, then Elinor will have analysed the data and prepared your survey report! Elinor said "I feel lucky to be part of the project. Before joining I worked as an ecologist in Mid

Wales carrying out bat surveys. There aren't many greater horseshoe bats where I'm from, so it's fantastic to be in an area where you get the chance to see so many of them up close. I'm really enjoying getting to know Devon and the wide range of bat species here, and using my experience of bat sound analysis to help the project."

Volunteers

As always we are grateful to the volunteers who have been involved during year 4 of the project. Thank you to everyone who has given their time for activities such as analysing bat data, leading bat walks or taking part in practical tasks to improve habitats for bats. One example is Gunnislake Community Matters who have been organising bat walks in their area, and encouraging bat friendly gardening.

Bovey Bat Group



Bovey Bat Group (part of the Devon Wildlife Trust Bovey Tracey Local Group) have been working hard this year towards making the town a bat friendly place. The group received a small grant from the bat project towards buying some detectors, as well as some training. This year they ran monthly bat walks throughout the spring and summer which introduced nearly 100 people to the wonderful world of local bats.

Bat Friendly Communities

Congratulations to Chudleigh Town and Beer Village on receiving their 'Bat Friendly Community award'. This reflects all of the great work volunteers have done to raise awareness of bats and improve wildlife conservation locally since the start of the bat project.

BAT FACT: Bats only have one baby per year; sometimes only once every 2 years. A baby bat is known as a pup.

Bat Friendly Beer receive their award



Chudleigh Award in the Bat Garden



BAT FACT: Bats have delayed fertilisation; they mate in autumn (when bats are at peak fitness) but the females don't actually become pregnant until after winter hibernation.

Bat Buddy Schools

We were delighted to award 18 more Bat Buddy awards this year, after delivering lots of school activity sessions. Well done to all these young bat champions!



Farway School Bat Predator Art

Devon Bat Survey

Our citizen science bat monitoring has proved as popular as ever with around 750 people taking part. Elinor is busy finalising all the stats and we will be updating our website over the coming months with lots of interesting details about what we have found out so far. If you are keen to see how your site compares to others in Devon, then keep an eye out for news on this.

Research Surveys

We have been busy throughout the seasons carrying out research surveys. In Braunton a group of volunteers braved all weathers to allow us to record greater horseshoe movements throughout the winter months. We recorded bats in all weathers and temperatures and are busy finalising a report which you will be able to read on our website.

Over the summer we have been working with the people of Buckfastleigh to carry out a project called BatFastleigh. This town is home to the UK's biggest maternity roost of greater horseshoes and we have been tracking the bats' movements to see where the most important areas are for them. This is allowing the community to plan verge and tree management to protect these vital routes.

Farm News

During the past year our advisors have made 199 farm visits to 108 different landowners in key greater horseshoe bat project areas. We also delivered 36 landowner workshops in this time covering a wide range of farm-related topics including Countryside Stewardship schemes, parasite management, herbal ley grasslands and woodland management.

Anna David, DGHBP Land Advisor



In March 2019 I qualified as an 'Animal Medicines Advisor' for farm animals and equines. This means I can provide advice to livestock owners about parasite management. This is a vital issue for greater horseshoe bats because certain worming products, in particular the avermectin group, are highly toxic to dung beetles and are responsible for a large part of the beetles' decline in recent years. Dung beetles are a favourite food for greater horseshoe bats, so reducing the use of harmful products without risking animal welfare is a priority for us. During the final year of the bat project I will be helping farmers make informed decisions about wormers and promote the use of sustainable worming techniques.

Anna David, Land Advisor



Anna's Dung Beetle display!

BAT FACT: Cats are the worst predators of UK bats. Prevent your cat from injuring or killing bats by putting a bell on their collar, or keeping them indoors from sunset until dawn

Update against our 5 year targets

Priority habitat secured:	963ha	target 1494ha
Hedges improved:	190km	target 230km
River habitat secured:	86km	target 175km
Workshops delivered:	105	target 31
Advisory visits:	759	target 950
Events run/attended:	248	target 170
Schools accredited:	36	target 31
School sessions:	228	target 250
Festival activities:	80	no target
Research surveys:	31	target 20
New bat records:	750,000 bat passes	no target
Greater horseshoe records:	14,000 bat passes	no target

How can you help?

- Make your garden wildlife friendly - visit our website for help and tips
- Take part in Devon Bat Survey (runs from April-September 2020)
- Encourage your town or village to become a bat friendly community
- Make a donation to our project at <https://www.devonwildlifetrust.org/support-us/make-donation> (don't forget to select Devon Greater Horseshoe Bat Project)

The bat team!



Contact our friendly team with your enquiry at bats@devonwildlifetrust.org

BAT WATCHING



Stick to footpaths and do not enter private land

Do not shine torches at bats

Avoid standing in their path

This is a partnership project consisting of; Bat Conservation Trust, Blackdown Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Clinton Devon Estates, Devon Bat Group, Devon Biodiversity Records Centre, Devon Communities Together, Devon County Council, Devon Wildlife Trust (Lead Partner), East Devon Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group South West, Natural England, North Devon Coast Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, North Devon Biosphere Reserve, South Devon Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Tamar Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, The Vincent Wildlife Trust, Torbay Coast And Countryside Trust, University of Sussex.