

## BATS (CHIROPTERA) - 2011

Dr. Colin Pope

Twelve different bat species were recorded in 2011. Eleven house roosts were counted by group members and householders. The Bat Hospital was, as usual, kept busy with many bat calls dealing with a range of species and circumstances and I am grateful for allowing me to use their records in this report.

Two Ph.D. research projects, started in 2010, continued into 2011. Orly Razgour (Bristol University) continued her studies on the ecology of the Grey Long-eared Bat and gave a talk to members of the Bat Group and other interested parties during her field visit to the Island in August. Caroline Moussy (Exeter University) continued her studies on Serotine bat populations across their UK range to understand how much movement there is between populations. She visited the Island in 2011 to collect further tissue samples during August.

The following bat species were recorded in 2011:

### **Greater Horseshoe Bat** (*Rhinolophus ferrumequinum*)

A single bat recorded from the Shide hibernaculum on 23<sup>rd</sup> January (C&JP). A small grilled hibernaculum alongside the entrance to Ventnor railway tunnel was monitored this year in connection with construction works taking place alongside. A single hibernating individual was present when the site was checked on 4<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> March but had gone when the site was checked on 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> April (GS).

### **Daubenton's Bat** (*Myotis daubentonii*)

The Bat Hospital received two Daubenton's Bats this year. An adult female had been grounded at Napoleon's Landing, Sandown on 23<sup>rd</sup> September and another female had been trapped inside a building at Camp Hill Prison on 28<sup>th</sup> September (GS). Both were subsequently released.

### **Whiskered Bat** (*M. mystacinus*)

The long established house roost at Pallance Road, Northwood produced a maximum count of 51 bats on 5<sup>th</sup> June (SC).

Mist netting at Standen Heath, near Staplers, yielded Whiskered Bats foraging in the area in June, July and August. There was a suggestion by Dan Whitby that one of these individuals might have been an Alcatraz's Bat, a newly recognised sibling species. Radio tracking resulted in a roost being located in an open fronted barn at Little Pan Farm, over 1.5km to the west. Eight bats emerged from here on 12<sup>th</sup> August.

The Bat Hospital dealt with three Whiskered Bats during the season: a female found inside of a wood burning stove (!) at Porchfield on 14<sup>th</sup> July; a male found on a pavement at Nunwell Street, Sandown on 31<sup>st</sup> July subsequently died; and a female was trapped inside a building at Camphill prison on 22<sup>nd</sup> September and released (GS).

### **Natterer's Bat** (*M. nattereri*)

Mist netting at Standen Heath identified Natterer's bats foraging in the area in June, July and August. Radio tracking these bats resulted in a roost being located in an oak tree to the south of here. 54 bats were counted out on 12<sup>th</sup> August (TO/LW).

**Bechstein's Bat** (*M. bechsteinii*)

Mist netting at Standen Heath identified Bechstein's bats foraging in the area in June, July and August. Through radio tracking, a nursery roost in a hedgerow tree at Staplehurst Grange Farm (the Lavender Farm), 400m to the west was identified. 54 bats were counted emerging from the tree on 21<sup>st</sup> August (TO/LW).

The Bat Hospital received a male on 11<sup>th</sup> April which had been found at the base of a tree in Combley Great Wood. It was subsequently released (GS).

**Noctule** (*Nyctalus noctula*)

Several were caught in a harp trap at Havenstreet Station cottage on 7<sup>th</sup> July by Caroline Moussy, whilst sampling Serotines at the roost. Single male bats were caught in mist nets at Standen Heath on 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> June (TO/LW). Other records were bat detector records.

**Serotine** (*Eptesicus serotinus*)

The maximum count this year was 43 on 27<sup>th</sup> June from Havenstreet Station Cottage (JL). Caroline Moussy was able to sample 2 females on 7<sup>th</sup> July at this roost. On the following evening, she caught 8 at the annually monitored Adgestone roost. 33 bats were counted out of a roost at Bridge Farm, Godshill on 30<sup>th</sup> July (NE).

The Bat Hospital received an adult male which had been hit by a cyclist on the cycleway at Merstone on 15<sup>th</sup> August (GS).

**Pipistrelle** (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus* / *P. pygmaeus*)

The maximum roost count this year was 186 bats counted on 16<sup>th</sup> June at a regularly monitored roost in Hamstead Drive (LG).

The Bat Hospital dealt with 45 Common Pipistrelles (of which 15 were female); 14 Soprano Pipistrelles (including one female) and 18 unidentified Pipistrelles during the year (GS).

**Brown Long-eared Bat** (*Plecotus auritus*)

The maximum count from the Brook Hill House roost was just 10 bats this year on 1<sup>st</sup> June (MJ).

The Bat Hospital released a male which had been trapped inside Providence Cottage, Porchfield on 29<sup>th</sup> October (GS).

**Grey Long-eared Bat** (*P. austriacus*)

A grounded juvenile male was found in a building at Wroxall Manor Farm on 3<sup>rd</sup> August. It was taken into the Bat Hospital but subsequently died. A female, attacked by a cat at Howgate Road, Bembridge on 8<sup>th</sup> June was subsequently released. (GS)

Orly Razgour returned to the Island 15-19 August to continue her studies on this species, catching 18 bats for analysis. These were principally from the Niton roost and Yaverland Manor. Whilst here, she gave a talk to the bat group about her preliminary research findings. She has been comparing the Isle of Wight and South Devon populations as well as looking for the species elsewhere in the country.

National estimates suggest that there are around 1000 individual Grey Long-eared Bats in the UK, making this the rarest species after Alcatraz's Bat and Mouse-eared Bat. The Island roost size averages around 10 bats; the only known South Devon roost holds 35-40 bats and is the largest known in the country.

Roost sites tend to be large loft spaces (Brown Long-eared Bats can use smaller roosts of c 1.5m in height), large barns with big windows, and cracks and crevices in natural rocks.

When bats in a maternity roost give birth, they hide away in crevices and are not visible in the roost space. They re-emerge into the loft spaces as the babies grow.

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The long known Niton roost has been the subject of particular study. The average size is c 12 bats. The roost has increased slightly since 2010 and in 2011 included 5 males and 6 juveniles. During the summer, all the females have an alternative roost site in the cliffs above Windy Gap car park, St Catherine's. Cliff roosting by Grey Long-eared Bats occurs regularly in southern Europe but has not previously been recorded from the UK.

Only radio tracked 8 bats from the Niton colony. They foraged up to 3.5km from their roost site with much of the main foraging some 2km away. This is in contrast to Brown Long-eared Bats which forage much closer to their roost sites.

The preferred foraging areas are meadows, marshes and riparian habitats during the summer months, again in contrast to Brown Long-eared Bats which forage within woodlands. During the autumn, the foraging areas of both species converge.

DNA analysis of droppings has been used to identify the target food items of Grey Long-eared Bats. They feed on a wide range of insects but specialise in Noctuid moths. These are hearing bats, ie they generally avoid bats when they hear their echo-location calls, suggesting that Grey Long-eared are very quiet hunters. Key prey items are Large Yellow Underwing, Silver Y, Dark Arches, Orange Swift, Heart and Dart and Common Crane-fly.

### **Barbastelle** (*Barbastella barbastellus*)

A grounded female was found at Marvel Farm, Blackwater on 20<sup>th</sup> August (GS).

Mist netting at Standen Heath identified Barbastelles foraging in the area in June and August. A female was radio tracked and located roosting in Rowridge Copse, which lies a remarkable 7km southwest of the foraging site on 17<sup>th</sup> August (TO/LW).

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