

BATS (CHIROPTERA) - 2006

Colin R. Pope

A total of twelve different bat species were recorded in 2006, including the very rare migrant Part-coloured Bat. Nineteen house roosts were counted by bat group members and householders. Graham and Donna Street's bat hospital was kept busy throughout the year; they dealt with a total of 123 bats, one of the highest counts ever. Mist netting was again carried out by Ian Davidson-Watts, as part of an ongoing survey to investigate woodland bats on the Island, with particular reference to Bechstein's and Barbastelle bats. This year, the sites netted were Lock's Copse (Newtown), MOD woods at Newtown Ranges, Combley Great Wood, Bouldnor Copse, Rowborough Bottom (near Shorwell), Fort Victoria, Borthwood Copse, Parkhurst Forest and Brighstone Forest. Members of the Bat Group carried out surveys of the Quarr Abbey estate on behalf of the monks and also took part in the Bat Conservation Trust Bats & Roadside Mammals Survey for the second year running.

The following bat species were recorded in 2006:

Daubenton's Bat (*Myotis daubentonii*)

Recorded by bat detector at the Eight Bells pond at Carisbrooke (C&JP).

During the summer, a female was grounded in a shop front in Pyle Street, Newport and a male was grounded at Bembridge Airport (GS).

Whiskered Bat (*M. mystacinus*)

A maximum of 26 were counted from a long-established house roost in Pallance Road, Northwood on 8 June (ShC). Bats were netted at this roost this year and their identity confirmed as *Myotis mystacinus*.

Whiskered Bats were caught in mist nets set up in Locks Copse, Newtown on 25 May; a male at Fort Victoria on 8 August; an adult male and lactating female in Borthwood Copse on 9 August; and a male in Brighstone Forest on 11 August (IDW).

Seven, all considered to be Whiskered Bats, were treated at the bat hospital during the year, comprising four males and three females. They were from Freshwater, Fort Warden, Yarmouth, Arreton, Winford, Staplers and Hunnyhill in Newport (GS).

Natterer's Bat (*M. nattereri*)

Three in Shide tunnel hibernaculum on 15 January and four there (the most ever recorded) on 4 February (C&JP).

Up to three in bat boxes in trees at the site of Beauchamps, Niton (SC).

Individuals caught in mist nets comprised a male on 25 May at Locks Copse, Newtown; a non-lactating female in Hummet Wood, Porchfield on 30 May; one at Rowborough Bottom on 1 June; a male and a female in Parkhurst Forest on 13 July and a male in Parkhurst Forest on 14 July (IDW).

Three females were treated at the bat hospital during the year. They were from East Cowes, Alverstone Garden Village and Godshill (GS).

Bechstein's Bat (*M. bechsteinii*)

Mist netting and radiotracking again led to the discovery of further sites and maternity roosts for this species. Individuals were caught in mist nets set up in Locks Copse, Newtown on 25 May; Hummet Wood, Porchfield on 30 May; and a male and lactating female in Combley Great Wood

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on 12 July. The female returned to a roost in Vicarage Copse, Briddlesford, from which 30 bats were counted out the following evening. A post-lactating female was tracked to trees behind East Ashey Farm on 6 August. A maternity tree roost was located in Bouldnor Copse; 11 bats were counted out on 8 August. A male was netted at Fort Victoria on 8 August. A maternity roost was located in woodland close to Burnt Wood; 55 bats were counted out on 31 May. A total of four males, mostly juveniles, were caught in locations in Brighstone Forest on 10 and 11 August (IDW).

A male in a bat box in trees at the site of Beauchamps, Niton on 17 November (SC).

A grounded male from Blackwater and a female from Fort Victoria were treated at the bat hospital during the year (GS).

Noctule (*Nyctalus noctula*)

This species is no longer frequently recorded. One was detected flying over Locks Copse on 25 May and one male was netted in Rowlands Wood on 5 August (IDW).

This year, a house roost at Havenstreet Station, regularly counted and believed to belong to Serotines, was investigated following a series of reports of grounded Noctule bats beneath the roost site. Netting confirmed that this roost was indeed a Noctule roost, not a Serotine roost as previously believed and referred to in earlier reports. A maximum of 54 bats were counted out on 6 July (C&JP). This roost presents something of a dilemma. Noctules are normally tree dwelling bats, so a maternity house roost was never previously suspected. The size of this colony is substantial and, at its peak, probably accounts for all the Noctule bats in the Havenstreet area. Several years ago, this roost was definitely a Serotine roost, suggesting that the Serotine bats may have been displaced.

Serotine (*Eptesicus serotinus*)

A maximum of 43 from the Meadow Cottage roost on 8 June (J&DG).

In Borthwood Copse on 9 August, six adult females and one juvenile male were caught in mist nets set across a main ride (IDW).

Four males were treated at the bat hospital during the year (GS).

Parti-coloured Bat (*Vespertilio murinus*)

A juvenile female at Freshwater Parish Hall in April was a remarkable find (GS). This comprises the eleventh British record for this migrant species, and the second Island record. Tony Hutson considered that this individual may well have overwintered here.

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

We are beginning to be able to separate these two sibling species and evidence is accumulating that *Pipistrellus pygmaeus* is by far the scarcest species, a pattern shown elsewhere in much of lowland Britain. Roadside bat surveys across the Island for the Bat Conservation Trust picked up 100 identified calls of the Common Pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus*) but only four calls of *Pipistrellus pygmaeus*.

Large maternity roosts are not common on the Island, but a few are known. A house roost at Hamstead had a maximum count of 97 on 29 July. However, this was substantially exceeded by a maximum count of 528 from a house in Hamstead Road, Cranmore on 9 July (C&JP, PS), making this one of the largest colonies in England.

The only confirmed maternity roost of *Pipistrellus pygmaeus*, a house in Quarr Road, Quarr had a maximum count of 62 on 13 August.

Pipistrelles are by far the commonest bats to be treated at the bat hospital. Sixty males, 27 females and 15 babies were treated during the year (GS).

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Brown Long-eared Bat (*Plecotus auritus*)

One in Shide tunnel hibernaculum on 15 January (C&JP).

Regularly caught in mist netting sessions (IDW).

Five male and four female bats were treated at the bat hospital during the year (GS).

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

One juvenile was netted in Brighstone Forest on 10 August (IDW).

Five male and two females were treated at the bat hospital during the year. These were from Bradling (2), Carisbrooke Castle (2), Little East Standen, Godshill and Alverstone (GS).

Barbastelle (*Barbastella barbastellus*)

Mist netting and radiotracking again led to the discovery of further sites and maternity roosts for this rare woodland species. A maternity roost was located in the north of Parkhurst Forest; at least 115 emerged from crevices in an oak limb on 15 July.

A male was caught in a mist net set up Robin Wood, Porchfield on 2 June. A non-lactating female caught in Burnt Wood on 31 May. Five females were caught in Rowborough Bottom on 1 June; four of these were pregnant. A male was netted in Bouldnor Copse on 7 August. One was identified by time expansion bat detector in Brighstone Forest on 11 August (IDW) and close to Quarr Abbey on 1 September (C&JP).

A female was grounded at Wroxall during the autumn (GS).

Acknowledgements

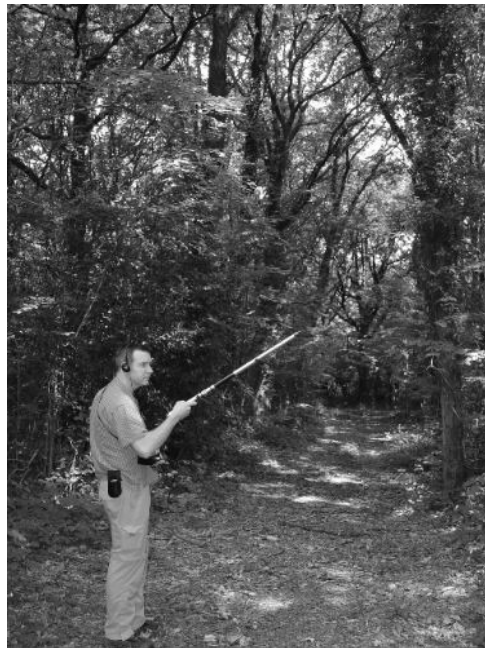
Kevin Batchelor, Neil Brown, Simon Colenutt (SC), Sheila Cooper (ShC), Ian Davidson-Watts (IDW), Carol Flux, Jill & Dave Green (J&DG), Margaret Jackson, Colin & Jillie Pope (C&JP), Paul Scott, Graham Street (GS). I am most grateful to Graham and Donna Street for details of bats treated at the bat hospital.

Author: C.R.Pope, 14 High Park Rd, Ryde, Isle of Wight PO33 1BP

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A ringed Bechstein's Bat ready to be released.
Photo Colin Pope



Ian Davidson Watts radiotracking a Bechstein's Bat.
Photo Colin Pope

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A juvenile female Parti-coloured Bat, photographed at the Bat Hospital in April, was the eleventh British record.
Photo Colin Pope



Natterer`s Bat, hibernating in Shide Tunnel
Photo Colin Pope