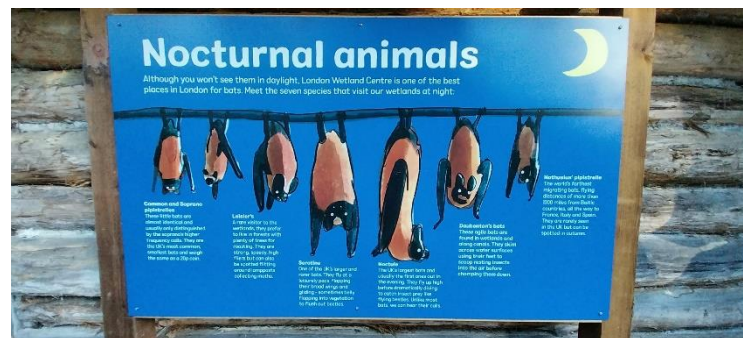


Trustees' Annual Report 2023

London Bat Group

Covering the period 01/10/2022 - 30/09/2023



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Trustees and Committee

Chair – Philip Briggs

Secretary – Cecilia Montauban

Treasurer – Ray Lancashire

Trustees – Edna Austin, Emma Little, Harriet Jones, Jess Taylor, Sophia Davies, Tajinder Lachhar

Enquiries Officer – Magdalena Howitt

Membership Officer – Beverly Evans

Newsletter Editor – David Jackson

Records Officer – Becky Wilson

Safeguarding Officers – Magdalena Howitt, Vanessa Greenstreet

Social Media Officers – Magdalena Howitt, Michelle Parsons, Siobhan Dempsey

Social Secretaries – Jonah Bell, Siobhan Dempsey

Governing Document

The London Bat Group Constitution was finalised on 28th February 2015 and is based on the Charitable Commission's model 'Association' Constitution for a Charitable Incorporated Organisation with voting members other than its charity trustees. A copy of the constitution is made available, to members, on London Bat Group's email group service (Groups.io).

Objectives and Aims

The London Bat Group's objectives are to protect and enhance London's bat populations as well as encourage the conservation of bats through educating and inspiring the public. The bat group carries out its work within the geographical area of Greater London.

The London Bat Group aims to:

- Advance the protection and conservation of bats, their roosts, feeding areas and
- hibernacula in Greater London (and other parts of the UK if deemed appropriate).
- Educate the public and the Group's members in all matters related to bats.
- Maintain a pool of licensed volunteer bat workers who can visit roost sites and provide expert assistance on matters relating to bats in Greater London.

The area the Bat Group covers is shown in the map below:



Committee Meetings

A total of three committee meetings were held, in March, June and September. All were held via Zoom. The AGM was held on 6th November, also on Zoom.

Donations and Support

The London Bat Group provides donations, grants and support to causes that align with our objective and aims. A project funding application is available on our email service, Groups.io, and is promoted during Bat Group meetings. Donations can be made to members or non-members. Donations requests are assessed on how closely they align to the Bat Group's aims and are voted on by members during Bat Group meetings. The Bat Group also aims to provide grants to members whose activities are considered to provide added value for the Bat Group and bat conservation.

In 2023 expenditure was mainly on purchase of a laptop for managing records and record requests, plus admin expenses such as Zoom account and other annual fees. We will be looking at putting funds towards bat projects in London in 2024.

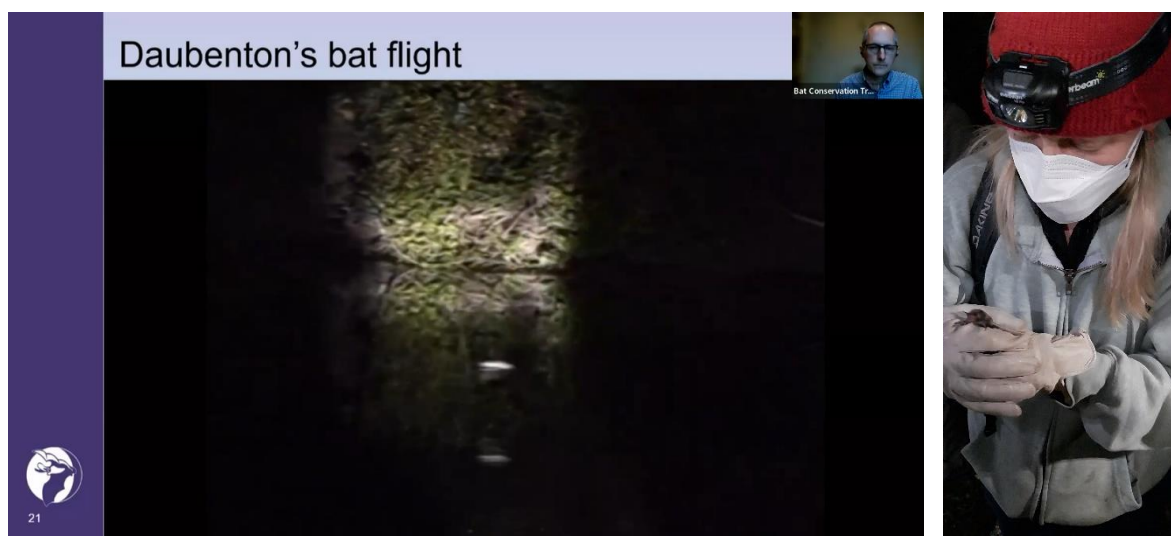
London Bat Group members provided in-kind contributions to the Bat Conservation Trust's barbastelle roost monitoring project in Sussex by contributing time to provide vital assistance with the project. See Projects for more information.



London Bat Group members assisting with BCT's barbastelle monitoring project in Sussex

Training

Two National Bat Monitoring Programme workshops were run with free places for LBG members: NBMP Level 1 focussing on the Waterway Survey, and NBMP Level 2 covering more in-depth bat detection and ID skills to enable volunteers to take part in the Field Survey. The first was run online, the second in Hyde Park, thanks to the support of Royal Parks. A few members also took the opportunity to attend some bat trapping and handling training in Sussex. There will be more regular opportunities for LBG members to participate in this type of training within London over the next year.



Online National Bat Monitoring Programme training / Bat trapping and handling training

One of our long-term Volunteer Bat Roost Visitor (VBRV) trainers, John Tovey, stood down from this role in 2023. Many thanks to John for the many years of training and the many VBRVs he has trained. John ran training in collaboration with the group's other VBRV trainer, Alison Fure, who has kindly agreed to continue delivering the training if we can find a new trainer to help deliver the training. An experienced VBRV, Tim Bradford, has kindly come forward and will be attending the next VBRV training for trainers weekend in March 2024, run by the Bat Conservation Trust on behalf of Natural England. There is much demand for VBRV training among bat group members so hopefully this will enable more people to be trained in this vital bat conservation role within London in 2024.

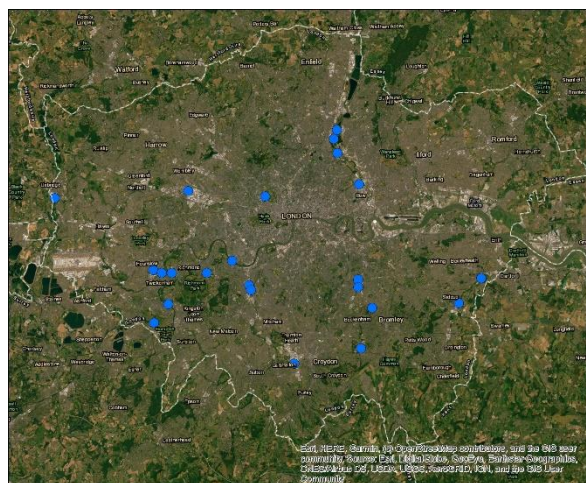
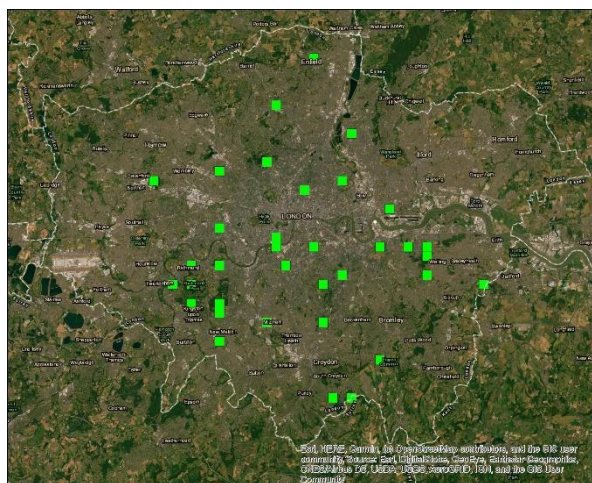
Projects

National Bat Monitoring Programme

There was excellent take-up of additional National Bat Monitoring Programme (NBMP) sites for the Field Survey and Waterway Survey in London this year, largely due to LBG members taking on new or repeat sites. So far data for 2023 have been submitted for 35 Field Survey sites, 15 of which had not been surveyed in 2022; and 23 Waterway Survey sites, 10 of which had not been surveyed in 2022. Seven summer roosts were surveyed as part of the Roost Count and four winter hibernacula as part of the Hibernation Survey. The latter include the two Highgate Tunnels sites that are monitored each year by London Bat Group.



LBG members carrying out a Waterway Survey in Richmond Park



NBMP Field Survey (left) and Waterway Survey (right) sites surveyed in London in 2023



Natterer's bats hibernating in Highgate Tunnels

Barbastelle roost monitoring

Nine members took the opportunity to assist with BCT's barbastelle roost monitoring project at the Mens in West Sussex in August. LBG's help with this project was a significant component of its successful delivery and it was a great opportunity for members to get experience of monitoring a rare species with the use of thermal imaging cameras. We had great views of the bats emerging, including juveniles limbering up by stretching their wings before flying.



Night vision camera screenshot of a barbastelle emerging from a tree roost

Richmond Bat Species Action Plan

Four members of LBG are part of the Richmond Bat Species Action Plan steering group and here are a few highlights from the borough of Richmond this year:

In August 2022 a Daubenton's bat maternity roost was found under a bridge in Barnes. We did a couple of winter inspections under the bridge but didn't find any signs of bats remaining there to hibernate.



Daubenton's bat maternity roost under a bridge in 2022 / Survey for hibernating bats in winter 2023

WWT London Wetland Centre has a disused exhibit, a replica of a trapper's log cabin, which we assessed as having high potential to be used by roosting bats. In Feb 2022 a herald moth was found hibernating there and as this species is often found hibernating with bats the conditions may be suitable for bat hibernation too. We proposed that the log cabin could be given over to bats and WWT agreed. Bat information boards have now been put around the outside walls and a heated maternity bat box has been installed on the outside. This will be switched on in the spring with the hope that it will attract a maternity colony of bats. Before the winter we plan to hang pieces of hessian cloth inside the cabin for bats to hibernate behind.



Newly modified "bat lodge" at WWT London Wetland Centre

Marble Hill Park in Twickenham has an icehouse which in 2010 was the subject of a study by John Tovey as to its suitability for hibernating bats and a proposal to English Heritage on how it could be made accessible to bats. At the time this didn't succeed in getting approval from EH

but current staff at the site are now actively interested in pursuing this project. The barrier now is that the icehouse has a large population of cave spiders *Meta bourneti* which are also of high biodiversity value, so we need to reassure the site staff that giving access to bats won't have a negative impact on the spiders. We are in the process of putting together a new proposal to EH.



Marble Hill ice house

We revisited the Warren Footpath project with the help of a few members of LBG. This project first took place from 2008-2012 and involved changing the expensive and very light-polluting streetlights along this stretch of the Thames with more environmentally friendly LED lighting designed to have low levels of light spill on the river and surrounding vegetation, with LUX levels temporarily increasing only when triggered by a walker or cyclist approaching each lighting column. We did before and after bat monitoring to assess whether the change in lighting had had a positive impact on bat activity levels. The results were encouraging but we have long planned to do repeat monitoring to assess bat activity several years down the line. In 2023 we received lottery funding to repeat the monthly surveys, again with the help of volunteers including LBG members. A summary of results has been submitted to the Heritage Lottery Fund.

Events and Talks

London Bat Group aims to organise a number of talks and events for Bat Group members throughout the year and attend events to promote bats and bat conservation to members of the public.

An LBG social & bat walk/survey was held in Battersea Park on 23rd September 2023. Fifteen members (plus a member's brother!) attended. It was great to have a good turn-out of members old and new meeting each other. We recorded four species around the lake: common pipistrelle, soprano pipistrelle, Nathusius' pipistrelle and Leisler's bat. There was lots of activity of the first three, just one detection of the last species. The records have been shared with Briannah Mollison-Read, Wandsworth Citizen Science Officer, who is keen to do further bat monitoring at their larger sites and will be in touch with the group for advice.



LBG members at the LBG social / bat walk in Battersea Park



Bat records from the bat walk in Battersea Park

Two online talks were run which were well attended and well received: “Application of airborne DNA to bat surveys” by Joanne Littlefair from Queen Mary University of London; and “The Diversity of Bats” by Abby Packham from BCT.

Events attended by LBG included the Love Your Zoo event at Battersea Park Children’s Zoo in June where we had a joint stand with BCT, and the Bugs, Birds and Beasts day at Silwood Park in July. Several members attended Chris Packham’s Restore Nature Now rally outside the Defra offices in September.



Love Your Zoo event in Battersea Park, June 2023



Bugs, Birds and Beasts day at Silwood Park, July 2023



Restore Nature Now rally outside Defra office, September 2023

Accounts

London Bat Group Accounts 2022-2023

Period 1st October 2022 to 30th September 2023

Income	
Membership	£941.50
Donations	£36.27
Records	£1,390.00
Survey inc	-
Boat ticket sales	-
Bank interest	£63.66
Unidentified donations	-
TOTAL	£2,431.43

Outgoings	
Equipment	£499.00
Equipment repairs	-
Meetings, events & social	-
Admin	£232.71
Boat services	-
Insurance	-
Bat Atlas Project**	-
Project/Training	-
LBG Giving	-
Staff/volunteer expenses	£239.39
TOTAL	£971.10

Income less expenses	£1,460.33
Opening balance	£31,148.54
Add 'profit'	£1,460.33
Transfer of funds from Co-Op account	-
Closing balance	£32,608.87

LBG is currently in the process of developing a reserves policy in time for the next AGM in autumn 2024.