

Trustees' Annual Report 2024

London Bat Group

Covering the period 01/10/2023 - 30/09/2024



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London Bat Group

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Trustees and Committee

Chair – Philip Briggs
Secretary – Cecilia Montauban
Treasurer – Ray Lancashire
Trustees – Becky Wilson, Emma Little, Greg Hitchcock, Sophia Davies, Tajinder Lachhar
Enquiries Officer – Magdalena Howitt
Membership Officer – Beverly Evans
Newsletter Editor – David Jackson
Records Officer – Becky Wilson
Safeguarding Officer – Magdalena Howitt
Social Media Officers – Magdalena Howitt, Michelle Parsons, Siobhan Dempsey
Social Secretary – 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 on 24th January, 25th April and 13th August. All were held via Zoom. The AGM was held on 7th November, also on Zoom.

Reserves policy

A new reserves policy for LBG funds was presented and proposed at the AGM where it was unanimously approved.

LBG has built up substantial funds, particularly through the pandemic years when spend on projects and activities fell away. The trustees understand their duty to spend income on charitable causes within reasonable time, and the need to justify any reserves held for what are reasonable operational needs. While the group has very limited operational costs, with no salaried staff, and no ongoing obligations or commitments to long-term projects, it was felt that some reserves should be retained to enable such projects and additional spending in specific years. The level of reserves was of much debate, ranging from £2k to £10k, and the committee ultimately voted to have a reserve of £7,500. This helps focus our attention on using our funds for projects that will benefit bat conservation in London.

The aim is to reach a reserve level of £7,500 over 5 years, through funding equipment, creation of new bat roosts, buying bat boxes etc. We are keen to hear from members about any ideas they have or sites where there is real scope for improving for bats in ways that might be within our funding means.

Investment Policy

LBG will invest a proportion of its surplus funds for the purposes of providing an income stream to support the Group's charitable activities. The Group will use investments specifically set up for charities, which have associated ethical policies, where deposits are protected under the Financial Services Compensation Scheme, and the Group considers this is a prudent and proportionate means of balancing our financial needs and ethical concerns.

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.

LBG funded several bat conservation/monitoring projects and also training/learning opportunities for members. These are described in more detail below.

Training

New Volunteer Bat Roost Visitor (VBRV) Trainer

Tim Bradford is the new VBRV trainer for LBG, alongside our long-term trainer Alison Fure. Tim has been a VBRV for 12 years across several counties including South London and has experience of training delivery through his work as an ecologist. Tim attended the 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 and this will enable more people to be trained in this vital bat conservation role over the coming years.



National Bat Conference

LBG funded three places for members to attend the National Bat Conference which took place at Reading University from 13th – 15th September. This provided a great opportunity for these members to increase their knowledge and learning through attending talks and workshops and networking with other bat workers.



London Bat Group members at the National Bat Conference, three of whom had their places funded by LBG, and a further one of whom had their place funded by the Bat Conservation Trust as a thank you for acting as a Local Coordinator for BCT's NightWatch project

LBG members had opportunities to gain experience and training in survey methods including hibernation surveys, trapping surveys, bat box checks, bat handling and identification. See the survey and monitoring projects summarised under Projects below.

Projects

Projects funded by LBG

In January, LBG secretary Cecilia Montauban presented two project ideas relating to the conservation of the relatively rare, migratory *Nathusius' pipistrelle* – both of which were subsequently funded using London Bat Group membership fees.



A newly ringed Nathusius' pipistrelle found during bat box checks at Bedfont lakes

Dataloggers

18 ibutton dataloggers (total cost: £2,359) were funded in January. These dataloggers were placed inside bat boxes at Bedfont lakes (just south of Heathrow), where Patty and Brian Briggs have been monitoring bat boxes for well over a decade, with very good occupancy by *Nathusius' pipistrelles*. Indeed, it was the first site in the UK to record *Nathusius' pips* roosting in boxes. The dataloggers record the temperature and humidity within the boxes, to determine suitable microclimate conditions for these and other bat species recorded at the site. The first set of data has been downloaded (currently being analysed) and the dataloggers are back in boxes again now. The aim is to publish this information when the project is complete, which will aid land managers, consultants and homeowners with how to best position bat boxes.



Bat box checks at Bedfont lakes, with installation of iButtons

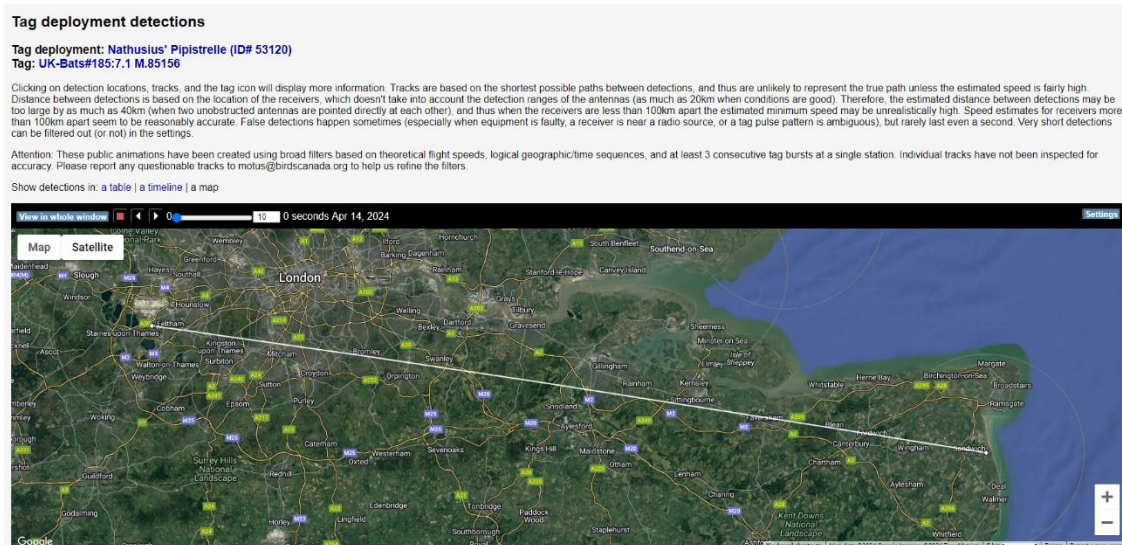
Motus tags

London Bat Group members also funded three Motus tags (total cost £750) in spring. The National Nathusius' Project that ran from 2014 to 2023 recorded ten long distance migrations by recaptured ringed bats between the UK and Eastern Europe: three of these were between sites in west Greater London and Latvia or Russia (the latter consisted of a record 2,018km journey). Together with funding from Hounslow council, Patty Briggs had a total of five tags to use this year at Stockers Lake and Bedfont Park, in a localised extension of the national project. While ten newly recorded female Nathusius' pipistrelles were ringed in the area this year, only two were suitable to be Motus-tagged (ahead of the migration period), which were at Bedfont Lakes. Motus tags enable temporary tracking of the bats for a few weeks (until the tags fall off or the battery fails), providing new information about migratory behaviour.



Setting up harp traps (left) and mist nets (right) at Stockers Lake

The two bats tagged this year were recorded as shown in the images below: one bat travelled to Sandwich Bay in Kent between the 30th April and the 10th May, while the second bat made it to near Amsterdam between the 10th April and the 16th May (with a spurious daytime record in NW Germany that coincided with the disruptive geomagnetic / solar storms on the 13th May!). These records add to a growing data set that is building a picture of when Nathusius' pipistrelles are migrating to breed, as well as where.



Tag deployment detections

Tag deployment: *Nathusius' Pipistrelle* (ID# 53121)
Tag: UK-Bats#186:7.1 M.85157

Clicking on detection locations, tracks, and the tag icon will display more information. Tracks are based on the shortest possible paths between detections, and thus are unlikely to represent the true path unless the estimated speed is fairly high. Distance between detections is based on the location of the receivers, which doesn't take into account the detection ranges of the antennas (as much as 20km when conditions are good). Therefore, the estimated distance between detections may be too large by as much as 40km (when two unobstructed antennas are pointed directly at each other), and thus when the receivers are less than 100km apart the estimated minimum speed may be unrealistically high. Speed estimates for receivers more than 100km apart seem to be reasonably accurate. False detections happen sometimes (especially when equipment is faulty, a receiver is near a radio source, or a tag pulse pattern is ambiguous), but rarely last even a second. Very short detections can be filtered out (or not) in the settings.

Attention: These public animations have been created using broad filters based on theoretical flight speeds, logical geographic/time sequences, and at least 3 consecutive tag bursts at a single station. Individual tracks have not been inspected for accuracy. Please report any questionable tracks to motus@birdscanada.org to help us refine the filters.

Show detections in: a table | a timeline | a map

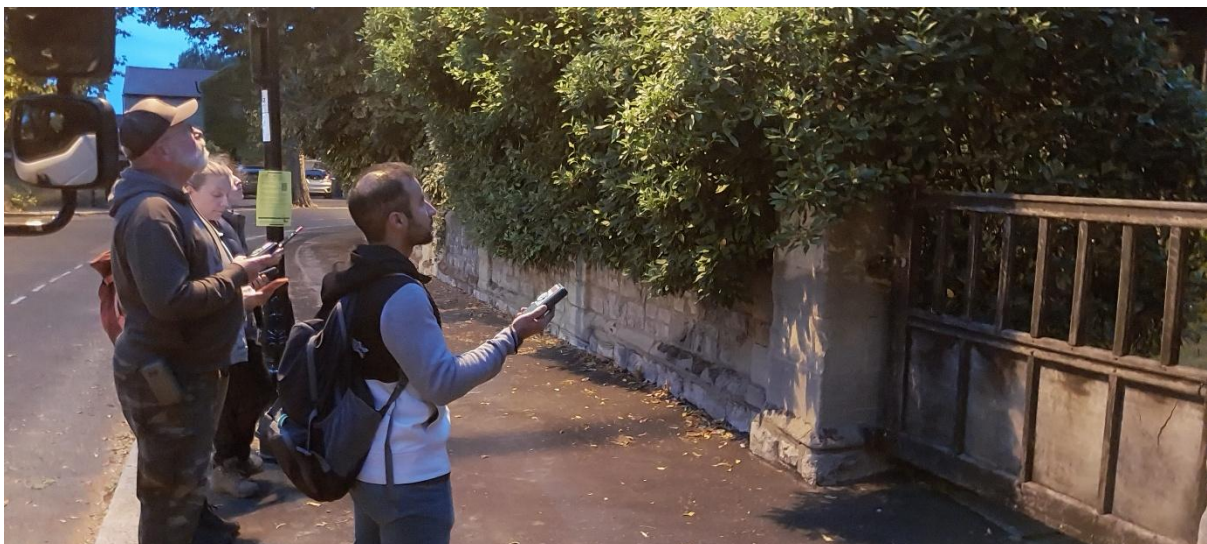


Motus tracking records for two female Nathusius' pipistrelles tagged in April this year at Bedfont lakes

Surveys and monitoring

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. So far data for 2024 have been submitted for 27 Field Survey sites and 16 Waterway Survey sites. Eight 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. The data collected from across these surveys in London make an important contribution to UK species populations trends produced by the Bat Conservation Trust.



LBG members carrying out a Field Survey transect in Ealing

Bat box checks

Bat box checks were carried out at Brompton Cemetery, Kensington Gardens, Bedfont Lakes, Sydenham Hill Wood and Addington Park, providing multiple opportunities for LBG members to get experience of bat handling and identification in the hand.



Checking a bat box at Bedfont Lakes / Brown long-eared bats in a box at Addington Park



Leisler's bat being examined after being found in a bat box at Sydenham Hill Wood

Trapping and radiotracking

LBG members got the chance to join in with bat trapping surveys at Bedfont Lakes in Hounslow, Richmond Park in Richmond-upon-Thames, and also at Stockers Lake, just outside Greater London in Hertfordshire.



Preparing to radio-track tagged bats in Richmond Park in July



Captured brown long-eared bat about to be released in Richmond Park

GLA-funded projects

The Greater London Authority (GLA) funded two projects led by the Bat Conservation Trust in London with support from London Bat Group. NightWatch is a project designed to engage new audiences in bat monitoring and conservation through engagement events and participation in the NightWatch survey which involves putting out a small passive acoustic detector, an AudioMoth, at a location of the participant's choosing, such as in their garden or local green space. The AudioMoth is left out for one night to record the calls of any passing bats. The recordings are analysed at BCT and a report of bat species and activity levels recorded is compiled for each site and shared with the volunteer who surveyed the site(s). 121 sites were surveyed across 28 of London's 32 boroughs. A key part of the project's success was the support of Local Coordinators who worked to engage individuals and communities through running survey and bat walk events. Two of the Local Coordinators are LBG members.

The GLA also funded a project to pilot setting up long-term monitoring sites across Greater London using high spec passive acoustic monitoring detectors (Song Meter Bat 3 Minis). With help from LBG members, BCT piloted this project in two boroughs, Lambeth and Richmond, collecting up to 20 nights of data from 20 sites (10 in each borough). It is hoped that this will lead to the project being rolled out across other boroughs in coming years.

Events and Talks

London Bat Group aims to organise a number of talks and events for Bat Group members throughout the year.

A bat walk for members was run at Carshalton Park on 7th June, attended by nine members who were treated to spectacular views of serotines, an increasingly elusive bat in London.



Carshalton Park bat walk

A trip for members was organised in July to visit the only known greater horseshoe bat maternity roost in West Sussex, about 100km east of its nearest neighbours. Six members came along and had a tour of the site from Daniel Hargreaves of the Vincent Wildlife Trust who purchased and carried out essential repairs to the barn as well as installing various enhancements for roosting

bats. We assisted with the emergence count and also recorded other bat species flying around, including the very rare barbastelle.



LBG members visit the greater horseshoe bat maternity roost in West Sussex / bats photographed inside the roost shortly before our arrival (Photos: Daniel Hargreaves)

An LBG social & bat walk was held on Hampstead Heath on 28th September 2024. Ten members attended and lots of bats were seen including pipistrelles and a noctule.



LBG members at the LBG social / bat walk on Hampstead Heath

Three online talks were run which were well attended and well received: “Bats of Sutton and Croydon” by Derek Coleman; “Nightsniffing: Reimagining bat walks as collective exploration of systems of urban change” by Dr Clifford Hammett; and “Over 20 Years of Bat Surveys at the London Wetland Centre” by Magdalena Howitt.



Online talks for LBG members in 2024

Outreach, lobbying and advocacy

New LBG postcards

A set of two LBG postcards was produced for taking along to events. The photos and design were by two Committee members (Cecilia Montauban and Magdalena Howitt respectively).



New LBG postcards

Outreach events

Six LBG members took turns to man an LBG stand at the Wandsworth Eco Fair in May, answering questions about bats from members of the public. Our stand had a variety of leaflets, postcards, noticeboards of information, myths and truths game, bat detectors, bowl of fruit and fibres pollinated by bats etc.



Wandsworth Eco Fair in May

Local Nature Recovery Strategy

LBG members helped feed into the Local Nature Recovery Strategy for Greater London led by the GLA. An online consultation was opened asking Londoners to identify key locations in London where habitat could be restored or created for the benefit of different species. This involved drawing a polygon around priority locations and indicating which species could benefit from habitat improvements. It will feed into a strategy which is planned for publication by the GLA in 2025.

Proposed development of Seething Wells

LBG member Alison Fure spoke at a public hearing about the proposed development of Seething Wells, a highly important bat foraging and roosting site in Kingston. Its importance as a roosting site keeps being contested but there is clear evidence of bats roosting in the past and the roosts will have been impacted by unsympathetic management of the site in recent years. We were pleased with the result that the planning application was thrown out and the councillors ruled that wildlife conservation should take priority. The developers will appeal of course but hopefully they are facing a losing battle.

Restore Nature Now march



On Saturday 22nd June, London Bat Group joined the Restore Nature Now march in London. Organised by a group of campaigning environmental NGO's ahead of the UK's forthcoming general election, the Restore Nature Now march and rally called on politicians of all parties to put nature recovery at the heart of their plans for the country's future.

London Bat Group members (plus Biggles the bat!) on the Restore Nature Now march on 22nd June 2024

LBG newsletter – Natterer's News

LBG reached a milestone in winter 2023-24 with the publication of the 100th edition of its newsletter, *Natterer's News*.



Accounts

London Bat Group Accounts 2023-2024

Period 1st October 2023 to 30th September 2024

Income	
Membership	£1,292.00
Donations	£784.24
Records	£600.77
Bank interest	£64.10
TOTAL	£2,741.11

Outgoings	
Meetings, events & social	£685.00
Admin	£419.88
Printing	£132.00
Insurance	£55.00
Project/Training	£2,830.80
Committee/member expenses	£459.00
TOTAL	£4,581.68

Income less expenses	-£1,840.57
Opening balance	£32,608.87
Add 'profit'	-£1,840.57
Closing balance	£30,768.30

Statistics for the financial year ending 30th September 2024

Milestones

- July 15, 2024: We achieved our highest recorded membership income of £1,135.50, surpassing the previous record set in 2018 (£1,134.50) by £1.
- August 7, 2024: Membership payments surpassed the total income from the last financial year (2022-23), which was £2,431.42, by £4.39.
- September 30, 2024: We recorded 120 membership payments totalling £1,292.00 (47.13% of total income), exceeding the previous record of £1,134.50 from 2018 by £157.50.

INCOME

Total income for the year ending September 30, 2024, stands at £2,741.11. This represents a 12.74% increase (£309.68) compared to the 2023/24 total of £2,431.43.

Membership Income Overview:

- Total membership income so far (as of September 30, 2024): £1,292.00, representing 47.13% of overall membership income.

This marks a 37.23% increase (£350.50) compared to the total membership income from 2023/24.

Nearly half (47.13%) of this year's income has come from membership payments, with the remainder sourced from donations and record searches.

Comparison to Previous Years:

- This financial year (2023/24) has seen 120 membership payments, surpassing the previous year's total of 84 by 36 payments.

Membership	Standard	% + / -	Discounted	% + / -
One Year	£7.50, 67 no., 38.85% (£502.00) of member payments	+67.61%	£4.00, 10 no., 3.10% (£40) of member payments	-(16.67)%
Three Years	£18.00, 39 no., 54.33% (£702.00) of member payments	+25.81%	£12.00, 4 no., 3.72% (£48.00) of member payments	+33.33%

Donations Income Overview:

- Total Donations: £784.24, accounting for 28.61% of total donation income.

Increase from 2023/24: This represents an impressive 1,754.56% increase (£636.38) compared to the 2023/24 total.

Milestones and Details:

- In June 2024, we launched our CAF Direct Giving website, which has contributed to the increase in donations.

The first donation through the platform was received in June 2024, followed by a second donation in September 2024.

This year (2024) has seen more donations than the combined total of the previous four years (2020–2023) and marks the highest amount since 2022.

Records Income Overview:

- Total Income from Record Searches: £600.77, making up 21.92% of total records income.

Year-over-Year Change: This represents a 56.78% decrease (£789.23) compared to the 2023/24 total of £1,390.00.

Trends and Observations:

- Income from 'Record Searches' has declined for the third consecutive year.

This financial year (2023/24) saw 12 record searches, compared to 28 in the previous year (2023/24), reflecting a notable reduction in both the number of searches and the total income generated.

Total Income as of September 30, 2024:

- Current Financial Year (2023/24): The total income stands at £2,741.11.

Comparison to 2023/24: This marks a 12.74% increase (£309.68) compared to the previous financial year's total of £2,431.43.

EXPENDITURE

Total expenditure for the year ending September 30, 2024, stands at £4,581.68. This represents a 371.80% increase (£3,610.58) compared to the 2023/24 total of £971.10.

Trends and Observations:

- Meeting, Event & Social Expenditure (as of September 30, 2024): £685.00, representing 14.95% of overall expenditure.

Year-over-Year Change: There was no expenditure recorded for the 2023/24 period.

(3x Sponsored individuals to National Bat Conference)

- Admin Expenditure (as of September 30, 2024): £419.88, representing 9.16% of overall expenditure.

Year-over-Year Change: This represents an 80.43% increase (£187.17) compared to the 2023/24 total of £232.71.

- Printing Expenditure (as of September 30, 2024): £132.00, representing 2.88% of overall expenditure.

Year-over-Year Change: No expenditure was recorded for the 2023/24 period.

- Insurance Expenditure (as of September 30, 2024): £419.88, representing 9.16% of overall expenditure.

Year-over-Year Change: No expenditure was recorded for the 2023/24 period.

- Projects/Training Expenditure (as of September 30, 2024): £2,830.80, representing 61.79% of overall expenditure.

Year-over-Year Change: No expenditure was recorded for the 2023/24 period.

(Bedfont bat boxes)

- Committee/member expenses (as of September 30, 2024): £459.00, representing 10.02% of overall expenditure.

Year-over-Year Change: This represents a 91.74% increase (£219.61) compared to the 2023/24 total of £239.39.

(3x Individuals' Sponsored Accommodation at National Bat Conference)

Summary

Total Profit for the year stands at -£1,840.57. This represents a 226.04% decrease compared to the 2023/24 profit of £1,460.33.

Overall, Balance: The closing balance for the year ending 2023/24 is £30,768.30, which represents a 5.64% reduction compared to the previous financial year's total of £32,608.87.