



“Echoes”

*Feedback from the East Devon AONB
‘Looking out for bats’ initiative –
February 2010*



Bat surveys

Over 47 farm bat surveys completed these have allowed farmers to discover which of the 17 species of British bats they have living and flying around on their farm. If you would like to find out more about the bats on your farm why not agree to a survey now? Some farmers were a little concerned about admitting that they had bats in their barns, but those who agreed to the survey will confirm that there was nothing to worry about. These surveys have identified **71 separate bat roosts for 5 different species of bats**. Surveys have also included several local churches – with church wardens keen to find out what sort of bats they have in their belfry!

Radio tracking of Greater Horseshoe bats was undertaken in summer 2009 following them from their maternity roost in order to identify prime feeding areas and corridors of travel. We completed **26 nights of tracking bats and in excess of 1200 hours of volunteer (valuable sleep!) time**; this has given us a better understanding of the areas around Branscombe that are important for the Greater Horseshoe bats. We also identified a number of night roosts and tracked one bat all the way to a day roost at Offwell – over 12km as the bat flies!

Farm walks

We have run another agri-environment walk this one led by Roland Stonex (FWAG) focussing on bat conservation and attended by **18 members of the local farming community**. The aim being to increase awareness of the potential benefits of different Higher Level and Entry Level Stewardship options available and to offer participants the chance to have a bat survey. At the end of the walk everybody had a chance to listen to bats with a bat detector.

Bat awareness events

This year Dr Fiona Mathews, local bat expert and Exeter University lecturer, has led events for Axe Vale and District Conservation Society, Otter Valley Association, Sid Vale Association, local members of the Devon Wildlife Trust and Colyton Scouts. These events are an introduction to bat ecology, bat detectors and also were an opportunity to see and hear (!) live bats, like the Natterer’s right up close.



Greater Horseshoe with transmitter and id tag

Habitat and roost enhancements

We are undertaking enhancements to hedgerows that have been identified through the radio tracking as important route ways for the Horseshoe bats as they travel and feed around the maternity roost. This has involved gapping up hedges, planting new hedges and planting hedgerow trees. These measures will enhance the landscape visually as well as improving the habitat for the Greater Horseshoes.

We have also repaired the roof of the barn that supports the maternity roost helping both the owner and the bats.



School visits and youth groups

Following a taster session in school by the East Devon District Council Education Ranger James Chubb, **five school visits (Colyton, Beer, Musbury, Shute and Sidbury Primary Schools)** gave over 230 local children a chance to experience bats at Beer Quarry Caves, an internationally important bat hibernaculum.



What is 'Looking out for bats'?

A 3 year landscape-scale bat conservation initiative centred on the Beer Quarry Caves at Beer in the East Devon Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

The initiative is mainly supported by the SITA Trust, with additional contributions from Devon County Council, East Devon District Council, the Sid Vale Association and Axe Vale and District Conservation Society.



“As a landscape-scale biodiversity initiative working hand-in-hand with farmers, local wildlife enthusiasts as well as schools, this is just the sort of wildlife project that AONBs do so well and just the sort of project fit for 2010 the International Year of Biodiversity”

Pete Youngman (AONB team).

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<http://www.eastdevonaonb.org.uk/Lookingoutforbats.htm>

