



“Echos”

*Feedback from the East Devon AONB
'Looking out for bats' initiative –
May-December 08*



Bat surveys

Over 30 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. We had more interest in these surveys than was expected with ten farmers having to wait until next season. If you would like to find out more about the bats on your farm why not agree to a survey now ready for the spring. 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. Following interest in the AONB stand at the Honiton Show bat surveys from church wardens and other locations have also been requested for the 2009 season.

Bat awareness events

Dr Fiona Mathews, local bat expert and Exeter University lecturer, has led **events at Lovehayne Farm and also at Offwell Woodland Education Centre**. The former, for the East Devon Small Woods network, being an introduction to bat ecology, bat detectors and also was an opportunity to see and hear(!) live bats, like the Natterer's right up close. The second event, was a bat identification training event and involved setting up a specialist harp trap. It was a real turn-up for the books when Leissler's bats were caught – a first record for Devon.

Farm walks

There has been an ADAS led agri-environment walk focussing on bat conservation attended by **19 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 every body had a chance to listen to the bats with a bat detector. The event was considered to be a great success and we will be repeating it again next year.



Bat detector training evenings

We have **trained 21 bat detectives** (batmen and batwomen!) for the project. During the summer they have been patrolling the East Devon countryside and villages with their bat detectors on the hunt for Greater Horseshoe bats. At the same time we are able to start building up a picture of other bat activity too – we are fortunate to have at least 13 of the 17 British bat species in our area. To date we have 12 records of Greater Horseshoe bats. One is a confirmed maternity roost, of approximately 50 bats.

School visits and youth groups

Following a taster session in school by the District Council Education Ranger James Chubb, **three school visits (Colyton, Beer and Sidbury Primary Schools)** gave over 150 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.

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

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