

The Norfolk Natterer

Autumn 1996 / Winter 1997

Newsletter of the Norfolk Bat Group

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The Norfolk Natterer is the occasional newsletter of The Norfolk Bat Group. The Norfolk Bat Group is a specialist study group within the Norfolk and Norwich Naturalists Society.

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Letter From The Editors

Early indication from the questionnaires returned are that you would like 2 newsletters per year, so here is the second for '96/97. Please, Please, **Please**, MORE CONTRIBUTIONS for spring/summer 1997

Chair Chatter

Statistically you requested it. We will now try to produce it. *TWO* copies of "**Norfolk Natterer**" per year that is. The feeling was that if one covered the autumn/winter and another for the spring/summer, we should also cover the two parts of the bats' year. Please accept our apologies for the later-than-planned appearance of this issue.

Illness, house moving and various other blips in the rich pageant of life have interfered with some of our plans, and the full analysis of your responses to the questionnaire will have to wait for publication until next time, so its still not too late to return yours, if you were one of the 1/3rd plus who have not had your point of view considered!!

This newsletter has contributions from many of the people active in the bat world in Norfolk (not just the usual two or three!). Contributions for the next spring/summer issue are of course welcome from **everyone**.

I think the articles show many of the range of batty activities going on. But, (beckoning with index finger) there's more

Obviously we should be pleased to see as many people possible at the meeting on February 9th 1997 - a Sunday afternoon this time - details enclosed. Time will be set aside for general group discussion, which will include the thorny issue of subscriptions. Also enclosed is information on the proposed **Bat Detector Weekend**, due to be held in July, based at Felbrigg Hall (and on other North Norfolk National Trust properties) with the Suffolk Bat Group and the Bat Conservation Trust. We hope this will be well-subscribed, but do note that this will be ALL-NIGHT BATTING (and a bit of day-time too), which may not be to everyones taste! Please fill in and return the enclosed form if you are interested in further information.

Lastly a big "*THANK YOU*" to everyone who has helped in so many ways - many hundreds of hours - for the purposes of bat conservation and The Norfolk Bat Group in particular. I would particularly mention the ground-breaking achievement of Mark in ensuring that the Norfolk Bat Group was the first county bat group to have pages on the World Wide Web - even beating the London Bat Group by a couple of months! Apologies to those of you who not 'into' The Net - I am sure one day it will be as common in homes as a television.

John Goldsmith

NBG on the WWW

We now have our own World Wide Web site on the Internet. Those with browsers should point them towards :

<http://www.norfolk-bat-group.org.uk>

The space is kindly donated by those awfully nice people at xoom. Please drop me an email if you have any comments or contributions (for the web site or the newsletter) on markbenfield@netscape.net

Mark Benfield

Natterer's Bats & Waxham Great Barn.

Natterer's bats are particularly elusive creatures. They emerge later in the evening than most other bats and fly close to cover, they change roost sites frequently and normally roost in small numbers. This is why we are uncertain about how many there are in Britain.

Typically, the first indication that a Natterer's bat roost may be present is the discovery of the distinctive droppings. These accumulate below favourite roosting sites or are found scattered more widely as the bats fly about inside the shelter of the roost building before and after going out to catch their insect food after dark.

Most of the summer roosts of Natterer's bats occur in barns, churches, manor houses and other substantial buildings. Typically these have heavy timberwork in the roof or elsewhere and the bats roost in mortice holes, crevices between the timbers or inside rotted beams, but they also roost in tree holes, especially in the spring and autumn.

It has been estimated that there are only 130 breeding roosts known in the U.K., and the roost in Waxham Great Barn which is estimated at between 50 - 100 animals, plus a similar number of young present in July and August, is probably the biggest in East Anglia. These types of site are occupied for a few weeks in the summer each year. Where do they spend the rest of the year and how many other different roost sites does a typical colony use? What are the most suitable sites and how can we preserve them in the future? It is clearly not enough just to protect a roost occupied for a few weeks, however vital, when the colony may be threatened by the loss of other important sites in the area.

Typically, the Natterer's is a woodland edge species, but does live in a wide range of habitats during the spring, summer and autumn. During the winter months - especially during the coldest weather from Christmas until the end of February - they like to hibernate in underground sites such as chalk caves and tunnels.

We do know that Natterer's bats are on the decline, just as most other bat species. There is concern that a continued decline could go on unnoticed for many years to come, making recovery more and more difficult. Reduced in number though they are, compared with Western Europe as a whole, Natterer's bats in the UK are doing comparatively well. There are few Natterer's bats in the western parts of mainland Europe, and it is only in Eastern Europe that they are found in similar numbers to those here in Britain. It is, therefore, all the more important to strive to maintain and increase their numbers in their strongholds here in the UK.

Unfortunately, redevelopment schemes continue to take a toll on these bat roosts. Barn conversions for houses and workshops, for example, are known to have destroyed many roosts in recent years.

Such losses may be avoided in future as roosting requirements become better understood and provision is made for the bats during building works.

Until now, the Natterer's bat has been a neglected species. The Norfolk Bat Group, which has the Natterer's bat as its logo (and produces an occasional newsletter called "The Norfolk Natterer") has already undertaken some detailed study of this species in the county.

There is also an in-depth project on the species starting in 1996, based in Wales and the English borders, to be carried out by Peter Smith, which will be funded and sponsored by The Bat Conservation Trust, English Nature, The Countryside Council for Wales and the Endangered British Mammals Fund of the People's Trust for Endangered Species.

John Goldsmith

Thetford Forest bat box checks.

The last checking dates for 1996 were October 13th, Brandon Park 9.30pm, October 14th Main 9.00am when 145 bats of 4 species were found.

Checks during 1997 will be made as usual in mid-April, mid-May, mid-June, mid-September and mid- October. These are typically on a Monday or Tuesday, but there are generally some weekend dates as well.

Please phone , fax or e-mail for details - dates should have been set by early March.

Rabies incident at Newhaven, Sussex.

During 1996 a bat was found with thr Rabies related virus. This produced a series of instructions and suggestions both from the BCT and EN. We present an abbreviated precise of these:-

The accompanying notes have been prepared in discussion with Tony Mitchell-Jones. Tony Hutson has been fully involved with the incident since the beginning and expects to remain in close contact with all authorities concerned. He has also been involved in preliminary field assessment to assess the occurrence of Daubenton's bat in the area.

It is likely that further field work will be required and possibly sampling will be pursued. We expect to be advising and possibly participating in this work. We hope we can rely on the full co-operation from any bat groups that may be asked to be involved in programmes of work that are approved by BCT. To some extent this may be determined by the particular strain of virus involved, as soon as that is identified.

We are also discussing any required revised advice on all matters concerned with the taking of bats into captivity, the delivery of dead or suspect bats to MAFF and on re-release.

Vaccination is available free through your local doctor. The vaccination is available from the Public Health Laboratory Service, Central Public Health Laboratory, Virus Reference Division, 61 Colindale Avenue, London NW9 5HT (Telephone 0181 200 4400). The head of the Division is Dr. David Brown.

That this incidence concerns a Daubenton's bat is surprising. There are only four instances of bat-related viruses in Daubenton's bat in Europe (Denmark '86, '87; Germany '86, Switzerland '92). 22

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have been tested in UK, and 89 in The Netherlands: all negative.

Tony Hutson The Bat Conservation Trust

Bats and rabies.

The Ministry of Agriculture has recorded a case of rabies in a bat in Britain. This arose from a bat that was found grounded in Newhaven and taken to a member of the Sussex bat group for care. The bat behaved in an uncharacteristic way and bit the handler. A few days later the bat was put down and the corpse sent to the MAFF veterinary laboratory for routine rabies testing as part of their continuing surveillance. Tests for rabies, including a fluorescent antibody test and other tests gave a positive result. More specific tests to characterise the virus are currently in progress and will take some time to complete. At present the bat is believed to be a Daubenton's bat. The person who was bitten and another who handled the bat are receiving post-exposure anti-rabies treatment as a precaution. Both are well.

It has been known for some years that rabies-related viruses, known as European bat lyssavirus (EBLV), exist in bats in Europe. The species most commonly involved is the serotine, *Eptesicus serotinus*, though small numbers of other species, including Daubenton's bat, have also been recorded as positive. This strain of bat rabies is distinct from the sylvatic rabies that infects other mammals (notably foxes, cats and dogs) and has never been recorded from any animal other than a bat. It seems that there is no interchange of the virus between bats and other animals. Thus a bat with EBLV is not considered to be a route for rabies to spread into foxes or other wildlife in Britain. The situation is quite different in the USA and Central America, where the type of rabies found both in bats and in the main terrestrial carriers, raccoons and foxes, is sylvatic rabies.

Since 1987, when it became apparent that bat-rabies was reasonably widespread in serotines on the western seaboard of continental Europe (Denmark, Germany, The Netherlands), the Ministry has maintained surveillance for the disease by testing bat corpses sent in by bat workers. Until the recent case came to light, over 1800 bats had been tested with no positive results. This suggests strongly that bat-rabies is not endemic (normally-occurring) in bats in Britain.

Although the origin of the Newhaven bat is unknown, there is a possibility that it might have originated on continental Europe as it was found in a disabled state close to a port, in an area where bat detector surveys have failed to find any Daubenton's bats. It is quite possible that this bat could have flown across the Channel or it may have been imported on a ship. Both these routes have been recorded in the past.

Tony Mitchell-Jones English Nature, Peterborough, 11 June 1996

Magenta Detector MK2

Over the years several people have asked for the loan of a bat detector to listen for any bats on their local bridge, river, farm or street, having found that a reasonable one is likely to cost over £100. I know a few have felt able to buy their own and have put them to good use. It is hoped that the circuit diagram published in the spring issue may have enticed some to have a go at building their own. We have had been able to use the museum machine for the past couple of years, but inevitably everyone would like to use it for the same week! Now, for those with a natural aversion to soldering irons but would like to occasionally have the use of one, John Tye at Swanton Morley has kindly put a

Magenta together for the group. A big thank-you to J.T. Book well in advance AND please buy your own batteries!

So that you know how good this instrument is J.T. tells me that when testing it in mid-Norfolk some of the bats had foreign accents. Hows that for range? If you would like to order one yourself, phone Magenta Electronics on 01283 565435 or fax them on 01283 546932

JG

Protect and Survive

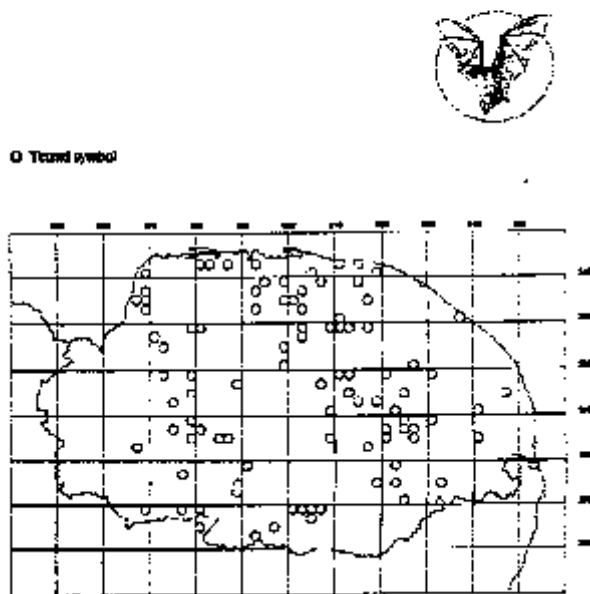
This short article attempts to explain some of the work carried out under the auspices of the Norfolk Bat Group on the conservation of underground bat hibernation sites in the county of Norfolk during the past ten or so years.

Background

Ten different species of bat currently inhabit our part of the country and six of these regularly spend at least part of the winter underground. The most abundant species underground here is Daubenton (invariably 60% - 70% of finds overall), followed in frequency by Natterers, Brown Long-eared, then occasional Brants and Whiskered and the rare Barbastelle in favoured sites. Only occasionally are Pipistrelle and Serotine found in underground or semi-underground sites. The Horseshoe bats are unlikely to be found outside of south-west England or South Wales, although Greater Horseshoes have turned up in recent winters as close as Leicestershire, and a Lesser Horseshoe even closer!

Figure 1.

Norfolk Underground Bat Hibernation Sites



Because of the flatness of our local landscape, the glacially deposited "loose" overburden of sands, gravels and clay do not lend themselves to natural underground caves - only the chalk, where it has been excavated and tunnelled by the hand of man, provides suitable underground winter retreats, otherwise all other sites are man-made and usually of brick, flint or concrete. Thirty odd years after the formation of The Norfolk Bat Group (Britain's first county bat group), we now know of over a hundred underground sites in the county of which more than 90% contain one or more bats in some winters. These are mapped as Figure 1. Norfolk is the best explored and recorded county in Britain in this respect.

Alarminglly our survey work has shown that while new sites are being discovered at less than one per year, the known sites are disappearing at the rate of nearly two percent per annum.

Given this situation it was felt that a programme of progressive consolidation and protection should be mounted, and it is the Norfolk Bat Group's aim to have the best twenty or twenty five county sites protected by the turn of the century, plus a county-wide spread of perhaps a dozen to twenty smaller, less important sites, where informal agreements or some protection work has been undertaken. To date some eighteen sites have been worked on, while sites in the parishes of Appleton, Leziate, Houghton, in West Norfolk, and

Whitwell, Tharston and Eaton in the east are currently in the planning stages, or actually underway. Basic bat hibernation requirements. To endure up to seven months hibernation a bat will store energy as brown fat. Special conditions are required to utilise this energy store in a slow and controlled way. Undisturbed conditions during the winter months.

- ✧ Darkness, or semi-dark
- ✧ A low, steady September to April temperature ideally in the area of 6 degrees Celsius, plus or minus 4
- ✧ Degrees Celsius, with no sudden changes, plus some pockets of warmer and colder air.
- ✧ A high constant relative humidity - ideally in excess of 90% R.H., though down to 70% may be
- ✧ Acceptable to species such as Brown Long-eared.
- ✧ Cracks and crevices of between 10 mm to 30 mm wide and more than 100 mm deep, with rough surfaces.

The real work

The decision to carry out work at each site is influenced by such factors as;

- ✧ actual number and species of bats currently using the site plus further possible bat potential.
- ✧ location of the site and other nearby sites.
- ✧ land-owners attitude.
- ✧ security of the site and exposure to potential vandalism.
- ✧ cost of improving and securing the site and whether it can be tackled as a DIY job, or will monies have to be obtained.

Currently our best underground hibernating site in the county is four short chalk caves with a lime kiln situated within an old chalk pit in the Stanford Army Field Training Area just north of Thetford. This has contained over 70 bats of 6 species, which puts it amongst the top ten sites in the British Isles. The main problem with these caves was that chalk and soil cascaded down the face and continuously filled them in. Due only to the hard work of a small group of permit holders these were manually dug open annually. An ambitious, costly and somewhat experimental approach was finally agreed between the Army, the STANTA Conservation Group, English Nature and the bat group to dig out (with a massive tracked 360 degree digger) the biggest east facing tunnel and build a protruding concrete block entrance shelter, incorporating a protective grille. This arrangement has worked well, with most bats on this site now using this tunnel.

Making brand new hibernation sites seems to be a rather popular pastime these days and certainly it's a good press and publicity puller. In our opinion, existing sites are a better and cheaper bet. Not only will they be 'weathered', but some bats may already know the site, and costs of improving the existing site by adding hibernation niches, improving the humidity and stabilising the temperatures will probably be less than new-build. Our only Norfolk example of a new concrete tunnel, some two metres wide and specially adapted for bat usage, is at Leziate and was the first such structure to be attempted in the U.K. although, as yet, only Long-eared bats have been shown to use it.

Special bat grille designs have been developed here to protect the hibernating bat sites from disturbance. The 25 mm hard steel bars at 150 mm horizontal spacings, along with our extra cunning locking mechanisms, have attracted considerable interest from other county bat groups, though such arrangements add to the initial costs. It is, however, now widely agreed that a solidly constructed site with a good grille and lock will stand the test of time. Our early efforts carried out "on the cheap" in the late 1960s have certainly cost more money in repairs than our later, well engineered examples.

Finishing

It has been possible to improve almost every existing underground site so far found and worked in East Anglia by adding what we sometimes call the "furniture and fittings". We realised at an early

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stage that a number of brick tunnels and similar structures looked suitable for bats in terms of humidity and temperature, but lacked suitable cracks and crevices in which the bats could conceal themselves. This was addressed initially with a variety of timber structures, but in the autumn of 1985 a series of experiments were conducted to manufacture terracotta clay and concrete "bat bricks". These have proved to be very attractive to hibernating bats, probably for the concealment they offer along with improved humidity and temperature retaining characteristics. Up to seven Daubenton have been found in a single brick, while four different bat species have been observed to use them over the nine winters of usage.

Monitoring

As in most facets of life, it pays to have some sort of look at what has been done to assess how competent and worthwhile it all was. Important county sites are checked for integrity and the bats counted once per month during the winter by licensed bat workers. A typical site is shown in Figure 2. Minor sites (usually less than 10 bats) might be checked only once or twice per winter, or even every other winter.

Data is recorded on computer, using a reliable interactive database called "Recorder" and the figures are also entered into a spreadsheet such as "Quattro-Pro" in order to be able to assess trends and compare annual figures.

A further commitment to site monitoring has been made using small "TINYtalk" temperature loggers which have proved to be 99% reliable in the very damp conditions. The temperature data is downloaded onto a laptop computer then automatically graphed. These have enabled individual sites to be properly investigated and bats' site usage successfully interpreted.

More practical bat conservation work has been carried out in East Anglia during the past decade than almost any other area, with the exception of work aimed specifically at Horseshoe bats in southern Wales and South-west England. May we thank and encourage everyone who has been involved, while inviting yet wider involvement. Long may this work continue!

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Bat Group Meeting

On Sunday February 9th 1997 we shall be holding a Norfolk Bat Group meeting at High Ash Farm, Caistor Lane, Caistor St. Edmunds, just south of Norwich, and only minutes from the A47 Norwich southern by-pass, starting at 2.30 p.m. (see details and map on enclosed flyer). This is a heated lecture theatre with seating for over 100 people, with refreshments on offer - so don't think we will all be huddled up in the corner of a barn sitting on bales of straw!!

Colin Catto from The Bat Conservation Trust will be our main speaker and he will talk about the proposal to involve all bat groups in a serious attempt to monitor bat populations of certain species. Please do come along and see what this is all about. Other shorter contributions will be on offer, plus what I hope will be an annual 'open house' session for "your news, views and comment".

J.G.

There they were. There they were gone!

I have been interested in bats for quite a few years, it all started while I was roaming the countryside in the middle of the night trying to photograph Barn Owls, because of this it wasn't long before bats got in the way. To cut a long story short, 6 years ago I became bat warden for the Great Yarmouth area which covers from Winterton to Fritton, and west to Acle, but not too far to the east!! This turned into an interesting "hobby", calling on people who suddenly realise they have a colony in their homes. Most of the people I have met over the years have been quite happy about the situation, some have been all right as long as the bats have stayed out of sight, others have been a nightmare and were not happy until all of the bats had gone and all the holes sealed up. I am still waiting for the person who wants me to hang up some garlic! In between all this happening we have had bats flying around our house, zooming tauntingly past our patio doors, as much to say "I bet you don't know where I live", and they are right. You don't have to do much running up and down the avenue at night before people start to talk.

One night late in April when, as I was getting out of the car, I trod on a bat dropping. At this point you think that the penny would have dropped, but it wasn't until the next morning, getting back into the car when I noticed three stuck to the windscreen that I realised that our bungalow had been chosen as a roost. This was to us very exciting as it would mean the end of the frustrating hunt to find a roost to watch, now we could sit up the drive in the deck chairs and watch and count how many we had staying. This was much more comfortable. Unfortunately this didn't last long, only a few nights, and all we had was one Pipistrelle. We hoped that was a start, but, although we kept watch all through the summer, we didn't see any other than those flying round the garden, until the end of the summer when he or she returned just for a few days before vanishing again. This carried on for four years and we had decided that the Pipistrelle was travelling from its winter roost to its summer roost, using it as a stop over point. This year was no different until mid summer when, out of the blue, there were lots of droppings, from 4 or 5 to 30 to 40 all lying on the drive under the entrance to the roost, something exciting was happening. We got some friends round the next night to help watch and count the bats as they dropped from the roost hole. Over the course of an hour 50 bats emerged.

The bats were with us for just a week, when we noticed that their numbers were decreasing. Within a few nights all had gone, but on the last night of seeing them some of our questions were answered. Two bats were flying around the entrance quite early on in the evening, unsure whether to go in or not, making up their mind, they flew in. Two minutes later coming out with one very large young hanging on to the underside of its mother and having great trouble in gaining height with all the extra load it was carrying. As males and females roost separately this was obviously a maternity roost, but why they used our house for a week or so remains guess work. Perhaps because of the very hot weather we were having it made their original roost too hot, or maybe they got disturbed somehow.

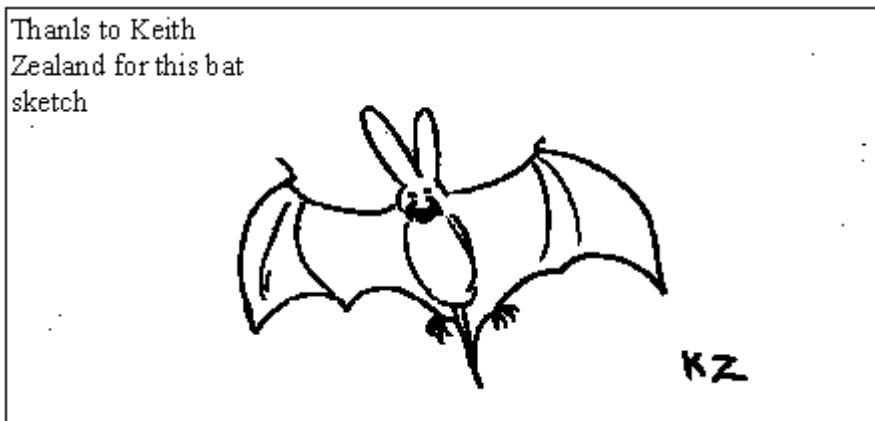
Whatever, I'm now back to hunting round the avenue to find them again, unless we are lucky again next year?

Kevin Simmonds

Recent bat box projects in North Norfolk.

During the winter of 1994/95, 65 boxes were put up in the woods on the National Trusts Sheringham Park estate in three areas. Within weeks just one was checked (out of curiosity) and found to have a Pipistrelle in it (early spring). In fact, the mild weather enabled bats to fly throughout the "winter" period and there were many and regular sightings.

Shortly after putting up these boxes, more were delivered to Bacton Woods and some of these boxes were also erected during the year. Autumn checks of the boxes have been relatively fruitful; although most occupied boxes were inhabited by single male Pipistrelles, two at Sheringham Park have had seven female Pipistrelles and seventeen brown long-eareds, respectively.



Many of the unoccupied boxes showed signs of use by bats, and a few by birds, the latter indicating too large an entry hole. Some old boxes erected at Holt Country Park some years ago have also now been renovated and included in the annual checks.

Also tried this year was a different kind of box, designed to be fitted on the walls of buildings. Only a few have been put up so far, and all but one has shown signs of use.

These boxes are made in two parts, a back board which screws to the wall and has a variable arrangement of baffles and crevices built into it, and a lid/cover which fits over the whole and incorporates a shallow trough which catches droppings for examination. This lid is covered with roofing felt. The bats gain entry by walking directly up the wall into the box, there is no landing board as in the tree-fixing types.

Whilst it would be interesting to try more of these boxes, time and materials restrict progress. There is also scope for experimentation, such as in size or internal arrangement of baffles, etc, but particularly in the design of the lid.

Most are covered in bitumen felt, one is marine ply painted matt black, but covering the lid with lead and/or insulating with polystyrene might make a south-facing box warm enough for a maternity roost if the night time temperature could be maintained. Perhaps even an electric blanket on a thermostat could be incorporated to maintain overnight warmth..... what we could do if only we had the time!

Keith Zealand

Letter from John Sizer.

It is more than fair to say that part of the NBG success has been due to the dedication and work of John Goldsmith and his cluster of bat group members. This coupled with the support of the Norfolk and Norwich Naturalists' Society has achieved much. I feel that it would be a sad day should the NBG depart from its links with this society.

On occasions I feel that I could offer the NBG more time than I actually do. I'm not sure whether John feels that he takes on too much, or whether he just can't get enough!! I would hate John to feel that he couldn't pass work on to me or other members of the group.

That aside, bat work in the U.K. is moving rapidly, and Norfolk has a reputation to maintain. In order for the group to consolidate the work I feel that the time is right for the active members of the group to meet on a regular basis, perhaps twice yearly. The group could perhaps organise, with support, fund raising and displays to increase the group's profile, and raise much needed finance. Perhaps, more importantly monies raised would assist research which should become the forefront of the group's work, it would be nice to think that the group could produce a distribution atlas of bats in Norfolk within the next few years. Again, bat workers should be meeting on a county basis to discuss projects like the National Bat Monitoring Project, amongst others.

In essence the group needs to be more formal, but not to the detriment of a winning formulae.

John Sizer 12 September 1996

John, Thanks for the returned questionnaire - The N.N.N.S project called Wildlife 2000 will address the bat mapping, monitoring will be the subject of a meeting on Sunday Feb 9th 1997. Do come along. - Ed

Rovers return

Members' Land Rover products have appeared several times at recent meetings, and not usually with wet concrete piled in the back - like mine! In fact I think we now know of three Land Rover 90s, one Range Rover and two Discoveries amongst members and friends of the group. I wonder how many others there are in use for batting and associated uses - just a little thought I had for a photo at some point! Please let me know if you have one used for (amongst other things) bat study. *JG*

More detective work - A Summer Meeting

Bat ultrasonics and the very best use of bat detectors has always been an interesting side to bat work, but I would be the first to admit that my understanding of the subject in depth has been less than 100%. Now Colin Catto of The Bat Conservation Trust has made the suggestion of running a bat detector weekend for the Norfolk and Suffolk Bat Groups. Plans are now well advanced, it will be in July on 18,19 20th, 1997, run from the Friday night to a Monday morning in North Norfolk, based at Felbrigg Hall and will involve many nocturnal hours tracking bats to their roosts and generally trying to learn as much as possible about this technique of bat work. Previous successful courses have been in Holland, Cornwall and elsewhere. English Nature have agreed to help sponsor this course, and indications of possible interest have been good. There is no need to indicate a definite booking at present, but if you would like further details, when available, please send an S.A.E. to me. There will be about 30 places - offered on a first come basis. There should be a few 'spare' detectors, but ideally

bring your own. Further details will be in the Spring & Summer Newsletter, but that may be too late for you to pencil it into your diary to avoid that transatlantic expedition you are planning! Flyer enclosed with this newsletter, but do telephone/fax or E- mail for latest thoughts. *JG*

Squeaking in dialect

The age-old rivalry between yorkshire and Lancashire has entered a new realm - the world of bats. Scientists have discovered that Pipistrelles in the two counties, assumed until now to be the same, are in fact different species.

The bats in Lancashire emit a more shrill call and have pinker faces. Yorkshire bats have darker faces and longer more pointed snouts.

The possibility that there were two species was advanced three years ago following research into their echolocation. Dr. Gareth Jones of Bristol University slowed down recordings and found that some squeaks were at 45Khz and others were at 55Khz. Since then Dr. John Altringham and his team at Leeds University have found that the vast majority of bats in Lancashire are of the 55Khz persuasion and most in Yorkshire are 45Khz. Crucially, the bats of the two counties never mate. Females are apparently attracted only to the echolocation of their own kind. Lancashire bats are believed to be generally somewhat leaner and better at flying. They also seem to lead a more stable life.

The females of both species live in large colonies but the Lancashire bats usually stay in the same place during the breeding season and return the following year, while the Yorkshire bats tend to move around more.

Now, scientists will have to decide on Latin names for the two species

From an article in the Daily Mail by Chris Evans.

Our Norfolk bats tend to hum at 55Khz - Ed

Meanwhile, back at the Batcave

Despite the title of the Norwich Fringe Project's Bat-Walk at Whitlingham Wood, it had nothing to do with a masked man in tights, much to the relief of the nineteen people who attended.

All, however, did not start well. Our designer chose the most scary, unrealistic bat illustration he could find [*judge for yourself below- Ed.*] and my first question was "how do I get bats to move out of my house?". Fortunately, on closer questioning, the woman concerned said she had seen them hunting in her garden, so they must be in her attic and when she heard more about them she decided they could stay if they were there!



Whilst it was still daylight we visited the restored lime kiln used as a winter roost by Daubenton, Natterers and Brown Long-eared bats. Here was a chance to see the famous Norfolk Bat Brick and hear about the workings of these kilns.

As the sun disappeared we walked up into the woodland with

a stop to view the recently erected bat boxes (constructed by Eaton Hall School), presently home to moths, spiders and millions of earwigs!

First bats appeared around ten o'clock, although there had been a few shouts of "bat" when late swifts passed overhead. The bats, Pipistrelles, buzzed close to our heads, conveniently allowing the whole group to try out a bat detector. Other bats seen included a very obliging Pipistrelle hunting in the well lit garden of The White House, and a team of Pipistrelles put on a fine acrobatic display over the river.



*Countryside Warden,
Norwich Fringe Project*

The walk was enjoyed by all who attended and will be repeated next year. However, on reflection, June is not the best month with sunset at 9.20 pm, especially as these events attract large numbers of children. It is likely that August will be chosen, with a much earlier sunset, and the chance of more bats with the appearance of juveniles.

Pete Bush

Lazy Lizzie and the Brandon Gang

Amongst the usual run of call-outs for orphan bats this summer, two particular dates stand out.

An early call on Sunday, August 4th, saw me heading south into mid-Suffolk to pick up a poorly bat from Haughley, near Stowmarket. The finder reported that the animal had been unable to take off from where it had been hung-up overnight, and that their cat had found it next morning on the patio, where it was squeaking loudly. As it was removed from its box, my first impression was that it was not a juvenile Pipistrelle but quite a large adult. Closer inspection revealed that it was a young female Leisler's bat, with small tears in the membrane of the left wing, worn-down thumb claws and, I later discovered, a fractured left wrist. She weighed only 8 g (normal range 11-20g) and was literally skin-and-bone, but she rapidly took to meal-worms, gaining 5g in a month. Leisler's are essentially a smaller, darker version of a Noctule, and used to be called the Hairy-armed bat, due to the fur stretching onto the fore-arms. They are quite rare in the U.K., and have yet to be recorded in Norfolk.

My previous experience with Leisler's had been at the Thetford Forest bat box project, where all the main compartments lie south of the county line. Here we find perhaps two or three Leisler's amongst scores of Brown Long-Eared and Pipistrelles, and they always appear noisy and aggressive, with teeth that demand respect. My captive Leisler's, however, was quite extraordinarily docile, not to say lazy, and liked nothing better than crawling up my sleeve or under my collar. The strength returned to her wing, the tears healed, and her thumb-claws re-grew, and for the last fortnight of her captivity, she was able to fly strongly in a room 4m square. This was no mean feat for a largish bat designed for high-speed flight, and entailed the execution of superb stall turns. I prodded her back into flight many times, and she never complained, but often showed a tendency to land on me, sometimes directly on my face! Bats' claws are like needles!

Bad weather delayed her release, but early in September, she flew strongly from my outstretched hand, around the Haugley garden where she had been picked-up, then did circuits between adjacent houses, eventually hanging-up under the eaves of one of them. I do hope she has survived. Much as I would have liked to keep her, her condition was too good for her to be kept in captivity for life, even

though she may well have missed-out on valuable guidance from her mother.

The other noteworthy date was Monday, the 5th of August, one day after I collected the Leisler's.

Pete Spencer at English Nature said that an American lady in Brandon was having problems with bats finding their way into the house, and could I visit and advise? They hadn't had any animals in for a week or more when I arrived, but I checked for gaps in walls and ceilings, and searched the loft for evidence. Several desiccated corpses of young Pipistrelles were present, but, below one gable, I found some droppings resembling those of Brown Long-eared, but quite a bit bigger. As I inspected these signs, a bat which was out of sight began swearing loudly in my ear, in a voice distinctly reminiscent of Leisler's! Quite excited by this find of a possible Leisler's breeding colony, I was very pleased that the American lady took an understanding attitude to the situation, helped by the support of interested neighbours who had known that there were bats in this roof for several years. I subsequently returned twice to Brandon, once narrowly missing a rescued bat that found its way to freedom before I arrived. On that occasion, I went into the loft again, and, attracted by squeaking, peered between the roofing felt layers to see a large pile of droppings beneath the tiles, with a definite Leisler's bat sitting glaring at me! On the second occasion, I hand-fed a skinny male Leisler's before putting it back in the loft. By this stage, the Americans had counted at least twenty animals leaving the eaves at night. It is very possible that the animals which turn up in our Thetford bat boxes are from this colony. The owner, agents and tenants of this property are all now aware of its importance, and we hope it will continue to flourish. Perhaps, next year, one or more of its offspring will make the short flight north to announce their presence in Norfolk!

Nick Woods October '96.

Sheringham Park

On 27th September JG made the trip to Sheringham Park (only half an hour late this time!) and we checked the bat boxes around this National Trust property.

The boxes are arranged in three groups of seven, with three boxes to a tree - 63 boxes in all. In addition two other boxes on an old oak tree by the house were checked (empty and no bat signs), and the wall box on the south end of the house. Two Pipistrelles were found inside.

A good omen appeared before we opened a box, in the shape of a flying/feeding bat flitting around in a clearing at 3.15 in the afternoon.

The other boxes are of two types - the usual bird-box lookalike and a wedge type of my own design. The yield of bats from the 63 boxes was 28 of three species:

- ✧ 12 Pipistrelles - in ones and twos, apart from one group of five.
- ✧ 15 Brown Long-eared - all in one box.
- ✧ 1 Noctule - a male.

The Noctule was reassuring as I had not seen one since the tree occupied in summer by a small group of five or six individuals blew down last winter.

The group of Long-eareds proved entertaining; I usually encounter them during "the rounds", but it was gratifying to see that JG coped little better than I do with an irruption of active hot bats when the lid is lifted and most of them disappear off into the woods! (but probably does not use National Trust language - Ed.)

Interestingly, all the bats were in the standard design box and none in the wedge type, although these are mounted on trees rather deeper in the woods and are probably too shaded. I was beginning to

think that the wedge design as a flop, until we checked the Bacton Wood boxes the following week, an account of which may be found elsewhere.

Keith Zealand, 10th October 1996

Harold Jenner's Serotines

Harold Jenner was born in 1921 and lived at Fritton in his later years. He took a very keen interest in many aspects of wildlife from an early age and was one of the people who took an interest in local bats, and undertook some serious study of them. He worked at the Fisheries Research Laboratory at Lowestoft in the 1960s and 1970s, when I knew him, he had a wonderful talents for making detailed fish models and spent many hours watching birds at sea. He is known to have made copious observations on many aspects of the wildlife of his home area when it was considerably more wild and interesting than it is today, such as the Natterjack Toads at Fritton Warren. Sadly he suffered from considerable ill health and fused vertebrae, which restricted his mobility greatly in later years. He died in 1992.

Nine sheets of hand written notes on bats of his turned up in a book (presumed to be formerly in the library of Harold Jenner) purchased in a Great Yarmouth book shop by Jo Parmentor. These include a hand written 'Key to British Bats' taken from Morrison Scott, a flight key to bats from L. Harrison Mathews and part of a compiled table of identification characteristics, flight and distribution information - remember no photocopiers then!

Jo has kindly allowed us to look at these notes and we reproduce below some extracts of these historic observations of particular interest on Serotine bats on the Norfolk and Suffolk borders, written nearly half a century ago, but with clear, well-recorded observations, written in a legible hand, in blue fountain pen ink, that is so fresh, they could almost have been written yesterday. Remember there are no automatic recorders or computers used here, let alone image intensifiers or other gadgets. Its all uncomplicated first hand observation obtained from long hours in the field. Inspiration enough for anyone reading this to want to tackle their own personal first hand bat observations in the coming summer? I hope so!

The only Serotine record for the county in 1996 came from Nick Woods near Thetford, but they are probably more widespread than this, but really rather rare here.

JG

Behaviour - Hibernation

Species - Serotine

In general, appears to begin hibernation about the last week in October, but I have November records, as below, all near Corton.

7th November 1950 Weather: - wind west, light to very light; heavy cloud with some rain in the morning, then light cloud with long sunny periods. The weather on the five preceding days was wild, wet and cold with winds from the north to north-east, strong and squally.

8th November 1953 Weather: - wind south-west moderate to fresh, overcast with a little light rain; a damp evening with moderate to light south west wind but no rain; wind south to south west, gale to strong gale on 1st November, but thereafter moderate. The first real frost of the winter occurred on 31st October.

To date I have little information on first appearances in Spring, the earliest being 14th April 1952.

Weather: - warm and sunny with moderate south wind. Preceding week had been warm and sunny with wind mainly south (east-north-east on 12th) variable in force from fresh to light. Other records are for the first week of May.

Behaviour - Flight

Species Serotine

From information gathered up to and including autumn 1955 (irregular observations!)

General Unlike Noctule, it is silent, or almost so, both before and during process of leaving roosts.

Method of leaving roosts.

Roost number S2/A (in a hollow alder tree) Exit hole small and c. 12 feet from ground. Bats crawled out of hole, hung head down with wings partly open then let themselves fall opening wings at the same time. They swooped to within about 5 feet of the ground before getting fully airborne.

Roost number S2/B (in a cottage roof) Emerged from space under ridge tile and slid about half way down the roof with wings open before getting airborne; then swooped low over the road, just clearing guttering in the process.

Roost number S3/A (in the roof of a farm building) Emerged from broken tile near the eaves, slid to edge and launched off into space - reaching to within c. 5 to 7 feet from the ground

Roost number S4/A (in a hollow elm tree) Much the same as S2/A

Duration of flight.

Flight begins about half an hour after sunset in May; - increasing to about an hour to an hour and a half after sunset by mid-summer, but decreasing as the months pass until in October when flight starts at about sunset, or even a little before.

I haven't enough information to fix time of end of flight period - from what I have it would seem that this is very elastic, depending on weather condition - the best I can do at the moment is to say that it seems to end somewhere about sunrise.

What information I have rather proves that there is not a fixed evening and morning flight but that activity goes on throughout the night. I doubt if this flight follows any fixed pattern - my small amount of evidence shows that it is erratic and not even consistent in an individual far less in the colony as a whole. The only rule seems to be that individual flights are less than an hour.

The time tables below (reduced to the nearest 5 minutes for the sake of clearness) were of flights made by the same male. I ringed this bat and marked him with a dab of whitewash for quick identification at roost S3/A.

July 25th 1953	First flight	21.45 to 22.20	35 mins
	rest	22.20 to 23.25	1 hour 5 mins
	flight	23.25 to 24.15	50 mins
	rest	24.15 to 24.30	15 mins
	flight	24.30 to 24.55	25 mins
	rest	24.55 to 01.05	10 mins

flight	01.05 to 01.45	40 mins
rest	01.45 to 04.20	2 hours 35 mins
flight	04.20 to 04.25	5 mins

August 1st 1953	First flight	21.15 to 21.50	35 mins
	rest	21.50 to 24.00	2 hours 10 mins
	flight	24.00 to 24.25	25 mins
	rest	24.25 to 02.15	1 hour 50 mins
	flight	02.15 to 02.35	20 mins
	rest	02.35 to 03.45	1 hour 10 mins
	flight	03.45 to 04.05	20 mins
	rest	04.05 to 04.55	50 mins
	flight	04.55 to 05.35	40 mins

August 8th 1953	First flight	21.20 to 22.05	45 mins
	rest	22.05 to 02.25	4 hours 20 mins
	flight	02.25 to 02.40	15 mins
	rest	02.40 to 05.15	2 hours 35 mins
	flight	05.15 to 05.50	35 mins

Other observations during 1951 and 1952 also produced evidence of activity throughout the night, but no exact record of times were made. I have no exact record of weather conditions for the three time tables above - only that it was fine and warm with moderate to light winds.

Light rain does not appear to restrict activity, but heavy rain keeps them in. I do not think that wind direction has much, if any effect neither does velocity. They hawk in sheltered areas away from unfavourable winds and do not adhere to regular hunting grounds.

The kate Harold Jenner, 1955

Barbastelles in Norfolk

There are now almost 80 Barbastelle Bat records (appertaining to over 100 individuals since 1859), from the county of Norfolk or adjacent Suffolk, making it the most important area in the U.K. for this very rare species. The only rarer U.K. breeding bat species is BECHSTEIN'S Bat, which had its first breeding colony found for many years in The New Forest in July 1996.

The Barbastelle is also said to be threatened throughout its European range, and a special conference to discuss the problems of this species has been called in September 1997, based in Germany.

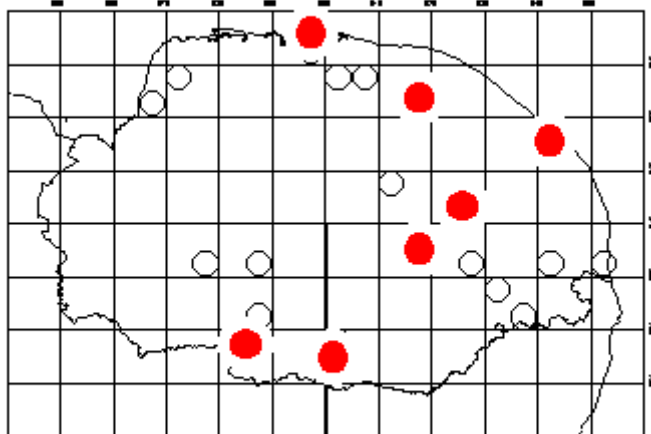


Many recent papers state that there were no recent breeding records for the species in the U.K., but we know of one confidential breeding colony near Cromer, in North Norfolk, until 1988, though this has subsequently disappeared, due to disturbance. *Barbastelles* are a species that seems to be particularly sensitive to human disturbance.

Although the generally held wisdom is that the *Barbastelle* is associated with wooded river valleys, our distinct impression in East Anglia has always been that it is more typically found associated with old parkland with big old trees and woodland - quite a few of which happen to be in or near river valleys.

Although it is often said that a majority of records are made in the winter, when hibernating individuals have been found while bat-workers were searching for other *Myotis* spp., here there are just as many summer as there are winter records.

Barbastella barbastellus



KEY:

Red Dot - SITES INVESTIGATED IN 1996
Clear dot - OTHER RECORDS

There is a reasonable geographical spread of post 1990 records for Norfolk as this tetrad map demonstrates:

In view of the scarcity of this species and the fact that Norfolk was a 'hot spot', The Norfolk Bat Group felt it appropriate to try to investigate all known (post 1950) Norfolk sites, for the species, during the 1996 summer.

Not all sites were fully investigated as well as we hoped, due to lack of time, and the

difficulty of successfully surveying an area in detail for them. The search will resume next year. However, one new site - in north Norfolk - was investigated by request and, excitingly, a *Barbastelle* breeding colony was discovered by three N.B.G. members on August 2nd 1996.

The site consists of a series of old traditional farm buildings which have lain unused and substantially undisturbed for many years. In a crevice between two heavy timbers above a doorway, a group of *Barbastelles* were seen by torch-light. There was estimated to be about 40 bats in total of which about half were young of perhaps three weeks old. They were disturbed by the torch-light and attempted to crawl off and hide above the timbers. English Nature were immediately informed. Disturbance was kept to the absolute minimum, and details kept confidential - for obvious reasons! There were several follow-ups - a habitat survey of the surrounding countryside for about a 4 km radius was mapped; some examination of possible suitable adjacent buildings; an external check on the roost - which had mainly dispersed by the end of August; and a late autumn meeting with English Nature and the landowners.



At this meeting the importance of the site was outlined, and agreed. The Norfolk Bat Group agreed to undertake some monitoring of the colony in 1997 (provided it reappears there) and Tony Mitchell Jones has very kindly agreed to loan an "EEV nite-watch plus" for after-dark observations, and a

small payment towards expenses for those participating in the monitoring. More substantial protection for the site, such as an S.S.S.I. agreement, and the finer details of exactly what necessary repair work would be acceptable, and when (from a Barbastelle's point of view), has yet to be negotiated and agreed, though signs for full co-operation are encouraging.

This is an very important find which, for the moment, with Barbastelle conservation firmly in mind, must unfortunately remain confidential. *JG*

FROM: The Robert Stebbings Consultancy Limited

74 Alexandra Road, Peterborough, Cambridgeshire PE1 3DG Tel: 01733 34031 Fax: 01
Dear Bat Group RE: NATIONAL BAT COLONY SURVEY
BCT NATIONAL BAT MONITORING PROGRAMME

Over the last 2-3 months we have had a number of enquiries from Groups about the Survey and its flexibility in terms of what is needed and both how Bat Groups can do what can we do for Bat Groups. This is a note of clarification, but we can answer queries as they arise.

Q: What is the National Bat Colony Survey?

In the 1970's when sudden loss of bats in colonies was noted, we decided it was monitoring exercise with as many colonies as we could find interested people. We depended most on property owners being trained to do their own counting, but in the development of Bat Groups in the 1980's, more are counted or stimulated by we have a data-base containing 19 years results (with a few going back earlier).

Q: What counts are required?

We have sought counts principally of the nursery clusters in June before young bats fly. Because individual colonies and species vary by several weeks in the dates of first young fly, we have asked for at least three counts spread in fact, we have a wide variety of information being sent in. A few people count them from the day they arrive until they disperse in autumn, while most send in two or three. We examine results and select the representative figure for comparison, but we enter all figures from each location. Some recorders send us five minute counts temperature and other climatic observations so we have a huge quantity of results.

Some clusters of bats arrive at a property in May and always disperse before birds. These records are useful and are being assessed together with others.

Q: What species are needed?

We have colonies being counted of all species except Barbastelle and Bechstein's change this year as colonies of both species have been found in 1996. In the case of pipistrelles, some people are noting the echolocation frequency of their colony. We are keen to continue receiving counts for all species, especially the less common.

Q: What roosts should be counted?

The importance of this type of recording is consistency of observation. Counting of bats in the same locality and the same time each year, using the same method by the same persons. We have people sending records of clusters in houses, churches, factories, met. stations, MoD establishments, caves, mines, trees- in fact, anywhere to give birth.

Q: What parts of the Country are counts needed?

We receive counts from all parts of Great Britain (England, Scotland and Wales), from the Channel Isles, Isle of Man and Ireland (North and South). We are always have more counts from the more remote parts of the country and some are sent from cottages.

We have relatively few counts from central Wales, Cumbria and much of Highland

Scotland, but often by far the largest colonies occur in those areas.

Q: How does the Bat Colony Survey work?

In early May each year, we send out a Newsletter summarising results for the pre the same time instructions and recording sheets are sent with contact telephone numbers for those requiring further assistance.

Bat Groups have two preferences:

1. Some Groups prefer to send out or take the Newsletters and recording for roost owners, using the opportunity to maintain contact with a householder. This is a very good way to reinforce to owners that "their" bats are important. Those Groups gather in the results, extract or copy the information and then forward a batch to us. This is our preferred option, because bats benefit.

2. Other Groups give us names and addresses of owners and we send Newslette direct and receive results back by post. Most of our records are obtained by th route -

Q: What kind of data-base and security do we have?

Our data-base has been developed over the 19 year period and has now recently be upgraded and improved. It is on Paradox. The machine with this database has no of connection with a modem or on-line connection with any other computer. This i deliberate so that confidential location information cannot be accessed delibera accidentally.

Q: What service can we provide to Bat Groups?

We have been able to give Groups relatively little information to date, principa we have not had the staff or finance to undertake extensive work. As part of th upgrading currently in progress, we will soon be able to provide county/regional mapping/distribution services. Hopefully, examples may be included in forthcomi Newsletters.

Q: What would you - the Bat Group - like from us?

Please write with suggestions as to how we can be of service to you and we will realise you are the key to securing more counts of consistent quality so develop partnership will enable a more authoritative picture to develop as to long term populations.

Finally, we are most grateful for all the help and support you have given over t we enclose a summary of the counts being done in 1996. You will note 751 forms which 696 were previously identified sites. ('there are over 2000 counted roosts So far, we have returns from 469 colonies but we will chase the rest soon. (Occa counts from two years or more ago with apologetic notes saying it got lost! Thi us!).

As you have heard from the BCT Office, this roost monitoring is an important com overall National Bat Monitoring Programme, so please help as much as you can. T

Wishing you good counting for 1997.

Dr Robert Stebbings
Julie Chaplin

Dr Mark Robinson
Henry Arnold

Example counts from a few counties:

County Bat Groups	Number of colonies counted	
	Bat group	Householder
Cambridgeshire		15

Devon		12
Dorset	6	8
Essex	12	9
London		3
Norfolk		8
Northamptonshire		3
Suffolk	23	9

Disclaimer

The views and information given in this newsletter are not necessarily those of the group as a whole. No responsibility can finally be taken for absolute accuracy and content, though every care has been taken.

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Site design by Mark Benfield