

Record count at the Trust's premier lesser horseshoe bat roost

Numbers of bats emerging from their maternity roost at the Trust's premier lesser horseshoe bat roost in the upper Usk Valley peaked at 922 in the summer of 2011. This is the highest count since monitoring began in 1993, and confirms this location as the largest known breeding site for lesser horseshoe bats in Western Europe!

New Project Officer

Dr Jane Sedgeley joined The Vincent Wildlife Trust team as the new OB4B Project Officer in January this year. Jane has worked with community and local interest groups on bat conservation projects in New Zealand and most recently Worcester-shire.



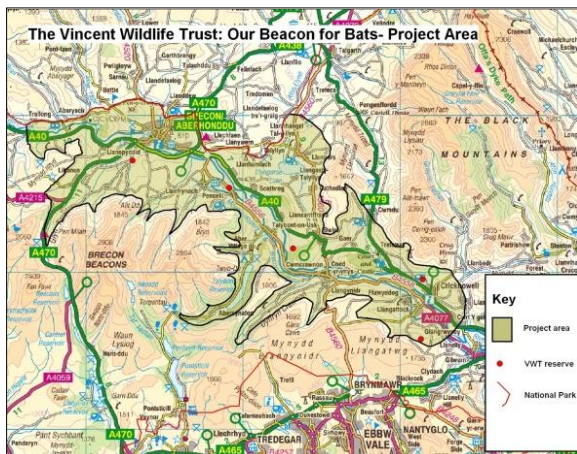
Welcome to our first €-Newsletter

The Bat Bulletin is the first electronic newsletter for The Vincent Wildlife Trust's Our Beacon for Bats Project (OB4B). We'd like to make it a regular publication to advertise forthcoming events, highlight opportunities for volunteers to join in with the project and report on news and activities throughout the year.



Photo: Lesser horseshoe bat. © Frank Greenaway

The OB4B Project was launched by The Vincent Wildlife Trust in 2011 and runs until 2013. It is funded by the Brecon Beacons Trust and the Heritage Lottery Fund. The project area covers the upper Usk Valley, from Brecon to Crickhowell, and has one of the most significant populations of lesser horseshoe bats in Western Europe. The Trust owns one lesser horseshoe bat maternity roost and manages four others within this area.



The project aims to raise awareness of the importance of lesser horseshoe bats in the valley by working with local people, schools and community groups. This is a great opportunity for local people to learn about the ecology and environmental needs of this special bat species. Additionally, we hope to provide local landowners with practical support and guidance towards enhancing the landscape for lesser horseshoe bats.

Activities for 2012

The diary for 2012 is filling up fast. Together with Brecon Beacons National Park Authority, Brecknock Wildlife Trust and the Brecknock Bat Group, we have a whole range of exciting activities planned for the summer including a series of talks, bat walks and visits to schools. The bat season will soon be underway and one of our main aims for this season is to enlist the help of more volunteers to discover how lesser horseshoe bats move between two VWT roost sites in the upper Usk Valley. We'll be using bat detectors to track the bats and pinpoint which landscape features are important flyways and feeding areas. Full training and equipment will be provided.

If you would like more information or would like to be involved, please contact Jane Sedgeley our new part-time Project Officer based in Brecon. Also see the provisional timetable at the back of this newsletter - but be aware, new events will be added as the season progresses. Please contact Jane if you would like more information or would like to be involved in the project.

A year in the life of the lesser horseshoe bat – winter and spring

As temperatures fall and insect prey become scarce, bats conserve energy by lowering their metabolic rate. The bats slow down their breathing and reduce their body temperature to enter a state of torpor.



Photo: Snowy Brecon Beacons. © David Jermyn

As the winter progresses the bats enter more prolonged bouts of torpor. This is known more familiarly as hibernation.



Photo: A torpid lesser horseshoe bat. © Henry Schofield

From November to March, bats have left their summer breeding sites to seek refuge from the frost in well insulated manmade structures such as ice houses, unheated cellars and the natural caves, mines and adits in the Llangattock Escarpment.

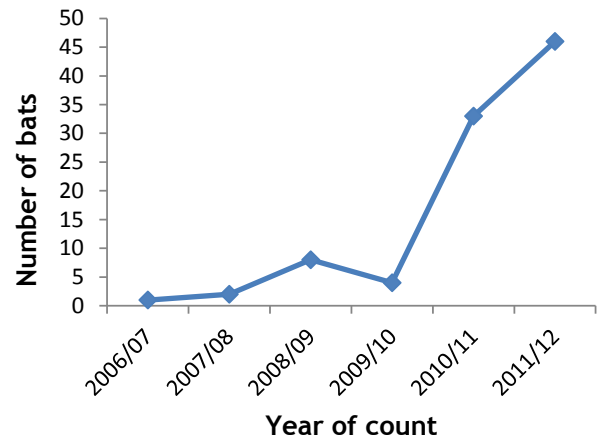
Bat hibernation sites in the Usk and Wye valleys are counted every December as part of The Vincent Wildlife Trust and Brecknock Bat Group annual winter monitoring programme. The restored ice house shown in the next photograph had record numbers of bats this winter, with 46

bats present. A very positive result considering it was used by just one bat before it was restored by The Vincent Wildlife Trust in 2007.



Photo: Restored ice house. © Jane Sedgeley

Graph showing peak winter counts of lesser horseshoe bats at restored ice house



In the early spring, as temperatures rise and insects become more abundant, lesser horseshoe bats move from their cooler hibernation sites into their warmer maternity roosts. Sometimes, if the temperature drops again, bats will move from these summer roosts back to the winter sites. Alternatively, they might occupy 'transitional roosts', which are usually cooler than maternity roosts and may allow breeding females to reduce their energy expenditure before becoming pregnant.

Wanted

A lack of hibernation sites may be a limiting factor for lesser horseshoe bats in the upper Usk Valley. Please get in touch if you know of any ice houses, unheated cellars, or WW2 pillboxes in the area
janesedgeley@vwt.org.uk
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Round-up for 2011

The OB4B Project kicked off in April 2011 with the appointment of a Project Officer. We were quickly out and about attending the Smallholder and Garden Festival, Talybont Show, Green Man Festival, and Cantref Church Festival. We held three public talks including a bat talk followed by an evening bat walk for a local Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group (FWAG).



Photo: Talk for FWAG

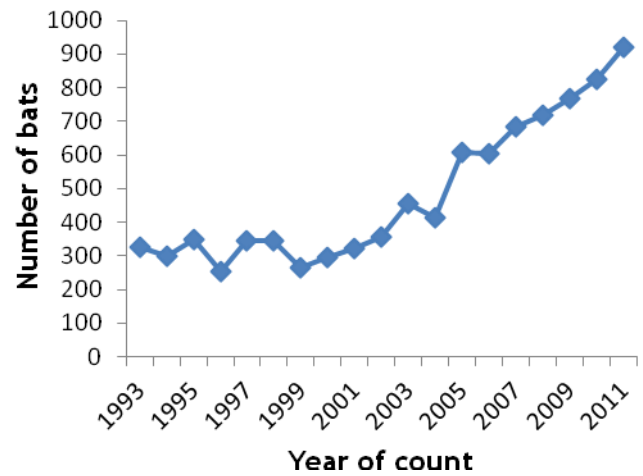
We also hosted an event at our premier lesser horseshoe bat roost in the upper Usk Valley to celebrate European Bat Night and ran some children's bat activities at Brecon Museum during a half-term break.



Photo: Reserves Officer David Jermyn talking to volunteers outside our premier lesser horseshoe bat roost.

It was a great summer for the bats at our premier lesser horseshoe bat roost. A record number of 922 bats were counted - making the site the largest known maternity roost in Western Europe!

Graph showing peak summer emergence counts of lesser horseshoe bats at our premier roost site



A training day was held with Brecon Beacons National Park Authority's education team to teach them about the project and lesser horseshoe bats in the Usk Valley. A subsequent teacher training day was held for local teachers, which was attended by staff from three primary schools and one secondary school. It is hoped that these teachers will now incorporate learning about lesser horseshoe bats into their teaching, with support from the VWT and the National Park's education team.

Our summer bat survey was also successful. Twenty-one volunteers were trained to use bat detectors. A combination of hand-held detectors and static units were used to survey and monitor bat commuting and foraging activity along 2 km² of hedgerows, tree-lines and landscape features. We gained some valuable insights into which flyways the bats were using to move through the valley. We were also very pleased to record calls of a greater horseshoe bat, a relatively rare species in Brecknockshire.

Thank you to all who participated in our events, and a VERY SPECIAL thank you to all the volunteers who assisted with our surveys. We hope you will help out again this year - and please bring along your friends!

Get Involved

We have a whole range of activities coming up over the summer with more planned. Please get in touch to find out more.



Photo: Lesser horseshoe bat exiting roost. © Frank Greenaway.

The OB4B Project is generously funded by Brecon Beacons Trust and Heritage Lottery Fund.



• Free bat detector training days for volunteers

Saturday 21st April. Introductory session for those wishing to volunteer on our bat surveys. Come along and learn about bat echolocation calls and how we can use bat detectors to survey these elusive nocturnal mammals. There will be an indoor session during the day followed by an outdoor session to test your new skills in the evening. This will be rounded off by a de-briefing session in a local pub for those interested! Venue and times to be confirmed.

• Monthly bat surveys

We will be running bat surveys once a month from May to September. They will be on Tuesday nights, with a fall-back option of Wednesday night if the weather is bad. We will be focusing bat detector walking surveys along hedgerows between Pencelli and Bwlch. **Provisional dates: 15th May, 26th June, 17th July, 21st August and 18th September.** Exact timing and meeting places TBC.

• Public walks and talks

Friday 8th June. Join us on an evening bat walk along the canal at Gilwern to help celebrate 200 Years of the Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal. Details TBC.

Wednesday 1 August 20:30 - 22:00. Bats at Brecon Promenade. Learn about bat ecology, watch bat behaviour and hear their echo-location calls using bat detector equipment during this fascinating evening event. Bring a torch and wear insect repellent. Meet: On the Promenade at the confluence of the rivers Honddu and Usk (SO 042 286) adjacent to car park. No dogs please. This is an access for all, family friendly event suitable for everyone over the age of 5 years. Suggested donation: £5 per adult. **Booking essential** on 01874 623366, 01874 623366. A Brecon Beacons National Parks Authority Event in partnership with Brecknock Bat Group, Brecknock Wildlife Trust and The Vincent Wildlife Trust.

• Booked events for community and interest groups

Monday 14th May. Bat watch - U3A.

Friday 25th May. Bat watch - Brecon Beacons Park Society.

Please note some of these dates are provisional, numbers may be limited and most bat activities are weather dependent. We're also hoping to programme in a number of additional events. Therefore, please contact Jane Sedgeley for more information or if you would like to come along to an event or assist with any of our bat surveys.

Email: janesedgeley@vwt.org.uk

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Website: www.vwt.org.uk



Foto: Bannau Brycheiniog.
© David Jermyn



Foto: Ystlum pedol lleiaf.
© Frank Greenaway

Ariennir prosiect 'Y Bannau- Bro'r Ystlum' gan Ymddiriedolaeth Bannau Brycheiniog a Chronfa Dreftadaeth y Loteri.



'Y Bannau – Bro'r Ystlum'

Croeso i'n e-gylchlythyr cýntaf

Lansiwyd prosiect 'Y Bannau - Bro'r Ystlum' (OB4B) gan y Vincent Wildlife Trust yn 2011 a bydd yn para tan 2013. Ei nod yw cynyddu ymwybyddiaeth o bwysigrwydd ystlumod pedol lleiaf yn rhan uchaf Dyffryn Wysg drwy weithio gyda phobl leol, ysgolion a grwpiau cymunedol. Dma gyfle gwych i bobl leol ddysgu am ecoleg ac anghenion amgylcheddol y math arbennig hwn o ystlum. Rydym hefyd yn bwriadu rhoi cymorth ymarferol a chyngor i berchnogion tir lleol fel y gallan nhw helpu gwella'r dirwedd ar gyfer ystlumod pedol lleiaf yn yr ardal hon.

Gweithgareddau 2012

Mae dyddiadur 2012 yn llenwi'n gyflym. Ynghyd ag Awdurdod Parc Cenedlaethol Bannau Brycheiniog, Cymdeithas Bywyd Gwylt Brycheiniog a Grŵp Ystlumod Brycheiniog rydym wed trefnu llu o weithgareddau cynhyrfus dros yr haf, yn cynnwys cyfres o sgysiau, teithiau ystlum ac ymweliadau ag ysgolion lleol. Bydd tymor prysur yr ystlumod yn dechrau cyn hir ac un o'n prif amcanion eleni yw dod o hyd i ragor o wirfoddolwyr er mwyn darganfod sut mae ystlumod pedol lleiaf yn symud rhwng dwy glwydfan VWT yn rhan uchaf Dyffryn Wysg. Byddwn yn defnyddio datgelyddion ystlumod er mwyn tracio'r creaduriaid ac adnabod pa nodweddion yn y dirwedd sy'n cynnig llwybrau ehediad a manau bwydo addas iddyn nhw. Byddwn yn rhoi hyfforddiant ac offer i bawb sy'n gwirfoddoli.

Os hoffech ragor o wybodaeth neu os hoffech gymryd rhan, cysylltwch â Jane Sedgeley, ein swyddog prosiect rhan amser yn Aberhonddu. Hefyd edrychwch ar yr amserlen gychwynnol ar gefn y cylchlythyr hwn, ond cofiwch y bydd digwyddiadau newydd yn cael eu hychwanegu wrth i'r tymor fynd yn ei flaen. Cysylltwch â Jane os gwelwch yn dda, os hoffech ragor o wybodaeth neu os hoffech fod yn rhan o'r prosiect.

Os hoffech gael y cylchlythyr hwn yn Gymraeg rhowch wybod i ni ac mi wnawn ein gorau i roi cyfieithiad i chi.

Gellir cael rhagor o wybodaeth am y prosiect ar ein gwefan.

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Foto: Ystlum pedol lleiaf.
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