

Bat Conservation Trust



# The Count Bat Project



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Heritage Lottery Fund

# Introduction

The future of sustainable bat conservation lies in engaging, educating and involving people in the wonder of bats. The Bat Conservation Trust and the bat groups across the country have made huge in-roads in changing attitudes to bats and debunking the myths and misunderstandings that surround them. We realise, however, that BCT's members and volunteers throughout the UK are not currently reflective of modern Britain. In order to continue to work towards our vision of bats and people living in harmony, BCT wishes to involve as wide a spectrum of people as possible in bat conservation. We intend to do this through the Count Bat Project.

The first stage of the Count Bat Project was funded by a Heritage Lottery Fund Project Planning Grant. The pilot began in September 2005 and ran for 11 months testing the theory put forward by BCT and bat group volunteers that more people would engage in bat conservation if we could overcome existing barriers. The project investigated opportunities for introducing new groups to the world of bats and involving them in valuable bat conservation.

BCT is delighted with the results of this project which frequently exceeded our expectations. The following pages outline the three case studies that took place in Avon, Birmingham and Dorset. More than 500 people from groups under-represented within the bat volunteering community took part in bat conservation work, which directly helped to deliver both local and UK Biodiversity Action Plans.

It is clear from the pilot projects that people do actively engage in bat conservation when introduced to bats, and as a result bats have opened up the wider natural environment and its associated benefits to many new people. As indicators of a green and healthy environment, conserving bats has the reciprocal benefit of ensuring the environment is also a pleasant place for people to live.

BCT intends to build on this work in a second stage of the Count Bat Project. We believe this is an important route to achieving our aim of a world where everyone, everywhere can enjoy seeing and hearing bats and has an opportunity to directly contribute to bat conservation.

# Count Bat: Avon Case Study – Brandon Trust

## Partners:

Avon Bat Group, Brandon Trust and The National Trust (Tyntesfield)

## Background:

Consultation with a number of bat groups showed that potential existed to run bat events accessible to people with learning and mobility difficulties. This complimented well with one of the many ideas discussed at our Volunteer Involvement Workshop held in January 2006. Therefore, it was agreed to develop a project that would engage such adult groups with bats in their neighbourhood. Working alongside Brandon Trust (an organisation supporting people with learning and mobility difficulties) our partners in the Avon Bat Group delivered a number of events with the help of The National Trust at Tyntesfield.

## Location:

The National Trust, Tyntesfield (Victorian Country House and Estate), Wraxall, North Somerset

## Timing:

February – August 2006



## Aims:

To identify whether adults with learning and mobility difficulties can be engaged in the valuable monitoring of bats and, if so, what considerations and resources are needed to deliver such activities.

## Objectives:

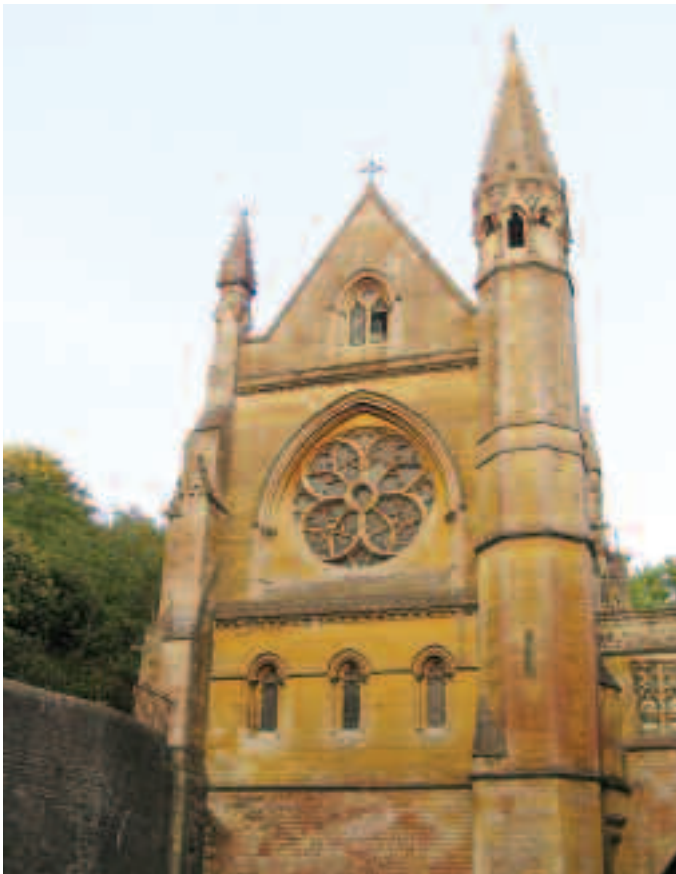
- To engage adults with learning and mobility difficulties in bat conservation.
- To raise awareness about bats among this audience and their family and friends.
- To create sustainable partnerships carrying out long term monitoring of bat populations.
- To carry out actions under UK and Local Biodiversity Action Plans.
- To trial the idea of ‘Bat Champions’ (i.e. individuals or groups promoting bats in their local area).
- To arrive at a ‘Project Model’ that could be replicated in other areas of the UK with other groups.

## Approach:

### Consultation with partners:

Avon was identified by the Count Bat Steering Group as a location with the potential to deliver such a project. The Avon Bat Group was approached and was keen to be involved. The bat group had already run several bat walks at The National Trust’s Tyntesfield estate and this project planned to build upon the existing relationship the bat group had with The National Trust.

An initial meeting with National Trust staff gained their support for the Count Bat Project and its aims. The Tyntesfield site regularly records eight of the 17 UK bat species within their grounds and has two known bat roosts on site. The Avon Bat Group and The National Trust’s knowledge of other local groups lead us to identifying Brandon Trust as an ideal partner for this pilot project.





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Brandon Trust is a charity that supports people with learning difficulties and mobility disabilities; they operate a variety of activities from the Scotch Horn Day Centre in Nailsea, Somerset. Consultation took place with the Brandon Trust conservation group. This highlighted the range of interests among their group and a strong mix of skills and abilities. After some thought, their group decided that the following activities would be of interest: gardening for bats, building bat boxes, bat photography, sonogram analysis, watching bats and counting bats emerging from roosts.

### **Pre-event Preparation:**

A roost of lesser horseshoe bats at Tyntesfield was identified as being a suitable area for activities to take place. The site was chosen as it was easily accessible, being only a short walk from the car park and therefore suitable for those with limited mobility or in wheelchairs.

### **Activities Delivered:**

Having earlier established that bats were present, the following activities took place during the summer of 2006 with the support of Avon Bat Group and local National Trust staff:

### **16th May 2006 - Emergence Count of Lesser Horseshoe Bats:**

Eight members of Brandon Trust attended this introductory emergence count of the lesser horseshoe bat roost. 74 bats were counted.

### **12th June 2006 - National Bat Monitoring Programme (NBMP) Colony Count:**

Seven members of Brandon Trust attended this event, which was the first ever NBMP colony count of the lesser horseshoe roost at Tyntesfield. 60 bats were counted and this result will contribute to our understanding of bat populations across the UK.

### **3rd July 2006 - Monitoring of the Farm Area:**

Seven members of Brandon Trust attended this event, the aim of which was to establish if bats were using a farm building. This valuable monitoring will influence how The National Trust proceeds with maintenance work intended for the building.

### **10th July 2006 - Portishead Lakes:**

11 members of Brandon Trust took part in a survey of these lakes. This was especially exciting as it was the first survey that the group organised and carried out by themselves. Three different species of bat were recorded.

### **24th July 2006 - Emergence Count of Lesser Horseshoe Bats:**

13 members of Brandon Trust took part in a further survey of the lesser horseshoe bat roost. This count was requested by Brandon Trust themselves, as they were keen to find out how many pups (baby bats) had been born. The results of this, and all of the previous counts, were also passed on to the local records centre.

### **2nd August 2006 - Introduction to Bats Workshop:**

Seven members of Brandon Trust took part in this workshop, held at the Scotch Horn Day Centre in Nailsea. The aim of the workshop was to provide the group with some formal education of bats in a familiar environment.

### **Bat Boxes:**

Six bat boxes were made and installed on site at Tyntesfield by Brandon Trust volunteers.

### **Count Bat Garden in Tyntesfield:**

In keeping with the interests that were expressed at the initial consultation, a plot of land has been set aside at Tyntesfield National Trust for Brandon Trust volunteers to design and create a bat-friendly garden. The site will also be used as an interpretative resource to educate the public about bats at Tyntesfield.



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## Bat Blog:

Brandon Trust put together an article for the BCT website on their experiences of monitoring bats at Tyntesfield.

## Sonogram Analysis Training:

Training in how to analyse sonograms is being organised and is to be delivered during the quieter winter months.

## Outcomes & Benefits:

Accessing their local biodiversity heritage and carrying out surveys had a great benefit as a social activity for Brandon Trust members, their families and staff. The group commented that “it was nice to be around like-minded people”. The value and benefit of social interaction as a by-product of bat watching and monitoring should not be overlooked or discounted. The outcomes and benefits relating to this pilot project have been numerous and can be summarised as follows:

- The Count Bat partnership has successfully engaged a group of adults with learning difficulties and physical disabilities with bat conservation. All parties involved enjoyed and gained benefits from the experience.
- The events delivered raised awareness about bats among this audience and their family and friends.
- A network of sustainable partnerships has been created for this site and long-term monitoring of bat populations can now be delivered.
- Through carrying out the above activities, Brandon Trust has contributed towards the actions under the UK Species Action Plan for the lesser horseshoe bat.
- Brandon Trust volunteers have become Bat Champions of Tyntesfield and will monitor the bat populations on site.
- A Project Model now exists from which other groups can endeavour to engage similar audiences.

## Evaluation:

The success of this project relied upon the partnership created. Time needs to be invested in the initial stages to create the right partnership to ensure the project will be sustainable.

This project has shown that once people are given the skills and resources to experience bats, they are able to access bats as part of their natural heritage for themselves and take part in valuable bat monitoring.

An activity outside of the usual hours of Brandon Trust was of great benefit to members as it provided a rare opportunity for families to attend an event and for them to take part together. There were also great benefits to Brandon Trust in the interaction the project brought amongst Brandon Trust volunteers, National Trust staff and bat group members.

The project has shown the concept of Bat Champions



can work. Brandon Trust has taken on the role as Bat Champions of The National Trust site at Tyntesfield and will take part in regular monitoring and promoting of bats there.

The same core group of people continued to attend the events and developed their skills as the project proceeded. This shows that once people are introduced to bat conservation, they have the continuing desire to participate in repeat surveys and activities.

Through our initial consultations we also know that similar centres such as Poolemead Royal National Institute for the Deaf are interested in involving their members in bat conservation. We are certain there is the need and demand for similar projects to take place across the country.

## Resources:

No special equipment was needed to engage this group in bat activities. Bats lend themselves well to such a group as there is something for everyone to do (e.g. use of bat detectors, tally counters, cameras, and survey forms).

A useful tool that was requested by Brandon Trust was a CD or an area of BCT's website that explained, more vividly than a leaflet could, about bats.

In the future it would be useful for BCT staff or volunteers delivering workshops to such groups, to have appropriate training in doing so.

## Conclusions:

**This work, carried out as part of the Count Bat Project, shows what can be done. Local bat groups are an extremely useful resource to have associated with projects such as this. They have the local knowledge of other organisations to build relationships with. What they lack is the time to develop these relationships into something more tangible and sustainable. The role of an experienced and dedicated Count Bat Project Officer, operating more locally, would be to act as a catalyst and facilitator to make many more such partnerships a reality for the benefit of all involved and our wider natural heritage.**

# Count Bat: Birmingham Case Study – St Paul's Venture

## Partners:

Birmingham and Black Country Bat Group, Birmingham City Council, Cannon Hill Park Friends and St Paul's Venture.

## Background:

Many communities exist in the UK where English is spoken as a second language, if at all. After consultation with the Birmingham and Black Country Bat Group the need for information on bats in languages appropriate to their local community was identified. The bat group highlighted the potential problem with communication when carrying out roost visits in the Balsall Heath area and other parts of Birmingham. A huge communication barrier exists for bat workers attempting to explain about bats to such communities.

In addition, research into BCT's membership and volunteer base clearly shows that we are not currently engaging Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) groups. There is a desire to address this to ensure our membership is more representative of the population of the UK.



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## Location:

St Paul's Venture, Balsall Heath, Birmingham

## Timing:

February – August 2006

## Aims:

To engage with the predominantly BME community of Balsall Heath, Birmingham in activities to the benefit of bat conservation. In the process of doing so, to investigate what considerations/resources are needed to deliver projects such as this successfully so that they can be replicated elsewhere with other communities.

## Objectives:

- To engage Black and Minority Ethnic groups in bat conservation.
- To raise awareness about bats amongst this audience and their family and friends.
- To create sustainable partnerships to carry out long-term monitoring of bat populations.
- To carry out actions under UK and Local Biodiversity Action Plans.
- To trial the idea of 'Bat Champions' (i.e. individuals or groups promoting bats in their local area).
- To build a 'Project Model' that could be replicated in other areas of the UK with other groups.

## Approach:

### Consultation with partners:

A key output from our Volunteers Involvement Workshop held in January 2006 was the need for the creation of a pilot project with the target group being 'Black and Minority Ethnic urban communities'. These communities may be unfamiliar with and disassociated from their local natural environment. In addition, the challenges relating to cultural differences and language barriers would also need to be factored into our approach.

Potential partners for such a project were identified by utilising the Birmingham and Black Country Bat Group's local knowledge of community contacts and activities in their area. A focus group meeting was held at St Paul's Venture (a local community centre) attended by interested partners including wildlife rangers, local teachers, bat group members, council ecologists, staff from the St Paul's Venture and members of Cannon Hill Park Friends Group. A pilot project was discussed and the group decided to hold a series of bat-related events focused around the St Paul's Venture Community Centre. To support the project a multi-lingual leaflet was produced introducing these communities to the world of bats.

### Activities Delivered:

A number of events were delivered with the support of the partners to assess if it was possible to involve the local community in valuable bat conservation.

### 28th March 2006 – Training - How to Lead a Bat Walk:

This training, delivered by the Birmingham and Black Country Bat Group was attended by two leaders from the Muslim Scout Group in Birmingham.

### 21st May 2006 - Bat Roadshow and Bat Walk:

The Bat Roadshow was held at St Paul's Venture Community Centre. The day consisted of bat-themed children's activities including: bat box building, bat-friendly planting, bat face painting, bat storytelling, bat arts and crafts and a bat raffle. Over 100 people, mainly local BME families, attended this event. The venue, format and activities followed a familiar pattern to that of previous open days held at the centre; however the theme of bats was unfamiliar.

An evening bat walk around the local parks and green spaces also took place. This was attended by 21 people, 14 of whom had never been on a bat walk before. Interestingly, despite the daytime activities being attended by mainly BME families, none of the 21 participants in the evening were from a BME background.



### 1st July 2006 - Balsall Heath Carnival, Bat BBQ and National Bat Monitoring Programme Sunset-Sunrise Survey:

The Balsall Heath Carnival is a recognised and established annual event. Local groups create floats which parade around the locality. BCT worked with St Paul's Venture to create a float on the theme of Batman and Robin. The Count Bat Project also ran a stall with bat activities for children to take part in. This also provided an opportunity to promote the evening event of a BBQ (entirely vegetarian) and National Bat Monitoring Programme Sunset-Sunrise Survey. This event was

promoted and advertised as a guided evening walk to look for bats. The BBQ and bat walk were well attended with 35 people present, the majority being from BME families from the surrounding neighbourhood.

### 28th May 2006 - The Lord Mayor's Show and Allotment Bat Walk:

This annual event attracts 20,000 people over a two day period. The Count Bat Project had a stall at the show promoting the project and raising awareness about bats. There were activities for the general public to participate in such as bat box building and making bat finger puppets. Approximately 200 people were engaged in meaningful bat-related activities at the stall. An evening bat walk was delivered in conjunction with the allotment group at Moor Green Allotments. 16 people attended this walk along with five members of the bat group who were on hand to lend support. Although these were all new volunteers to bats, none were from a Black or Minority Ethnic background.

### 21st July 2006 - Bat Cruise:

24 people attended this boat trip; all of whom had been involved in the previous events. The trip departed from the centre of Birmingham travelling along the canal, taking in the city at night and looking and listening for bats. Feedback from the event was good, one person commented:

*"I have only been here once and I heard 19 bats, it was fun and I enjoyed it a lot. I hope I come here again...."*

## Outcomes & Benefits:

The benefits to the local residents were numerous. The activities allowed members of the community to experience their local natural heritage in a new way. Many had never seen a bat in their local environment. The outcomes and benefits can be summarised as follows:

- The Count Bat partners have successfully engaged Black and Minority Ethnic groups with bat conservation. All parties involved enjoyed and gained benefits from the experience.
- The project has raised awareness about bats amongst this new audience.
- A network of sustainable partnerships has been created for this locality which hopefully can now develop further in future years.
- Through carrying out the above activities, the volunteers involved have contributed towards actions under the UK Species Action Plan (contained within the UK Biodiversity Action Plan).
- Nearly 500 people (new to bat conservation) from Black and Minority Ethnic groups enjoyed taking part in activities to the benefit of bat conservation.



- Of these, nearly 30 people took part in more than one event proving the potential for Bat Champions.
- A Project Model now exists from which other groups can endeavour to engage similar audiences.

## Evaluation:

This pilot project revealed one of the more difficult audiences to engage and involve in the valuable monitoring of bats. Unlike the other pilot projects, we were not working with a predefined and identifiable group, but with the wider community of the Balsall Heath area. Careful consideration needed to be given to the way in which the events were advertised and promoted, and investing time initially to involve the right partners was essential.

The multi-lingual leaflet was well received and has proven to be an effective tool in making that initial link with local communities. In addition it showed that, as an organisation, BCT was committed to involving communities in bat conservation in a customer-orientated way.

Through a range of activities it has been possible to engage groups of people from culturally diverse urban environments in bat conservation. Two bat walks were run in the same area of Balsall Heath. The first was advertised as a “bat walk” and was attended entirely by White families. The second was advertised as a “BBQ with a guided walk in the evening to look for bats” – 90% of the attendees to this event were Black and Minority Ethnic families. For nearly all attendees, it was the first time they had seen bats in their local environment.

The majority of people who attended expressed an interest to take part in other organised events. As yet participants are not at a level of confidence where they can take part in monitoring independently; training and further support is needed before this can happen.



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## Resources:

A multi-lingual leaflet was created in response to the need identified by the local bat group. Consultation took place over the most appropriate languages to use. As a result the four languages included in the leaflet are English, Somali, Arabic and Urdu. The leaflet included general information on bats as well as information for householders who find bats roosting in their homes. The leaflet is a springboard to generating discussion amongst groups on experiences of bats in different countries and cultures.

In addition to the leaflet, a display banner was created with the word “bats” translated into the 11 different languages spoken throughout Birmingham. It was integral to attracting attention and alerting people to activities being run.

## Conclusion:

**This work, carried out as part of the Count Bat Project, shows what can be done. Local bat groups are an extremely useful resource to have associated with projects such as this. They have the local knowledge of other organisations to build relationships with. What they lack is the time to develop these relationships into something more tangible and sustainable. The role of an experienced and dedicated Count Bat Project Officer, operating more locally, would be to act as a catalyst and facilitator to make many more such partnerships a reality for the benefit of all involved and our wider natural heritage.**

# Count Bat: Dorset Case Study – The Kingcombe Centre

## Partners:

Dorset Bat Group, Dorset Blind Association, Dorset Wildlife Trust, The Kingcombe Centre, Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) and Centre for Access and Communication Studies.

## Background:

As part of the consultation process surrounding the Count Bat Project we were made aware that Dorset Bat Group had been approached by the The Kingcombe Centre who were interested in taking part in a bat walk. The Kingcombe Centre is an organisation that runs various environmental courses and holidays catering for visually impaired adults. Although the bat group had neither the skills nor the resources to accommodate such a group, they did have the desire to acquire these and in doing so deliver bats to a new audience within their community.

## Location:

RSPB Reserve, Radipole Lake, Weymouth, Dorset



## Timing:

April – September 2006

## Aims:

To identify if it was possible to engage visually impaired groups in bat walks and bat activities and if so, what considerations/resources would be needed to deliver such activities.

## Objectives:

- To explore the engagement of visually impaired people with bat conservation.
- To raise awareness about bats amongst this audience and their family and friends.
- To create sustainable partnerships to carry out long-term monitoring of bat populations.
- To carry out actions under UK and Local Biodiversity Action Plans.
- To identify what resources bat groups need to make future bat walks accessible to visually impaired people.
- To arrive at a 'Project Model' that could be replicated in other areas of the UK with other groups.

## Approach:

### Consultation with partners:

A meeting of potential partners was arranged. This was attended by Dorset Bat Group, Dorset Blind Association, Centre for Access and Communication Studies and the RSPB. Discussions took place over how a bat walk for visually impaired people could be run and what resources and training would be necessary to deliver this.

### Pre-event Preparation:

#### 4th July 2006 - Visual Impairment Awareness

### Training:

Dorset Bat Group lacked the skills and confidence to be able to lead visually impaired people on a bat walk. There was a fear of the unknown and a concern about offending people through the group's lack of knowledge. To help overcome these initial concerns, Dorset Blind Association delivered visual impairment awareness training to the bat group. This allowed participants to gain a better understanding of the different types of visual impairments, how these affect vision and how to be a sighted guide with particular relevance to leading a bat walk.

Four members of the Dorset Bat Group and several Dorset Wildlife Trust Staff took part in the training.

### Activity Delivered:

After consultation with The Kingcombe Centre and Dorset Blind Association, the following event took place:

### 28th September 2006 – Bat Talk and Walk at Radipole Lake, RSPB Reserve:

Working with The Kingcombe Centre clients, a bat talk and walk was delivered at the RSPB's Radipole Lake reserve. Five people with visual impairments attended the event with their sighted guides. This was run as part of the 'Senses of Autumn' week at The Kingcombe Centre.

The event presented a chance to gain valuable feedback on various resources that BCT had produced for the event.

### Outcomes & Benefits:

Four members of the Dorset Bat Group are now trained as sighted guides and are able to involve visually impaired audiences in bat conservation. In doing so they will be helping to raise awareness of bats to new audiences in a new and challenging way, with the following associated benefits also occurring:

- The project allowed us to explore the possibilities within bat conservation for involving visually impaired people.
- The project raised awareness about bats amongst this audience and their family and friends.



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- The project created partnerships that can be built on for future events.
- The bat group and The Kingcombe Centre participants have carried out actions under UK and Local Biodiversity Action Plans.
- The project has been instrumental in advising BCT on resources needed to involve visually impaired groups in bat conservation in the future.
- A Project Model now exists from which other groups can endeavour to engage similar audiences.

### Evaluation:

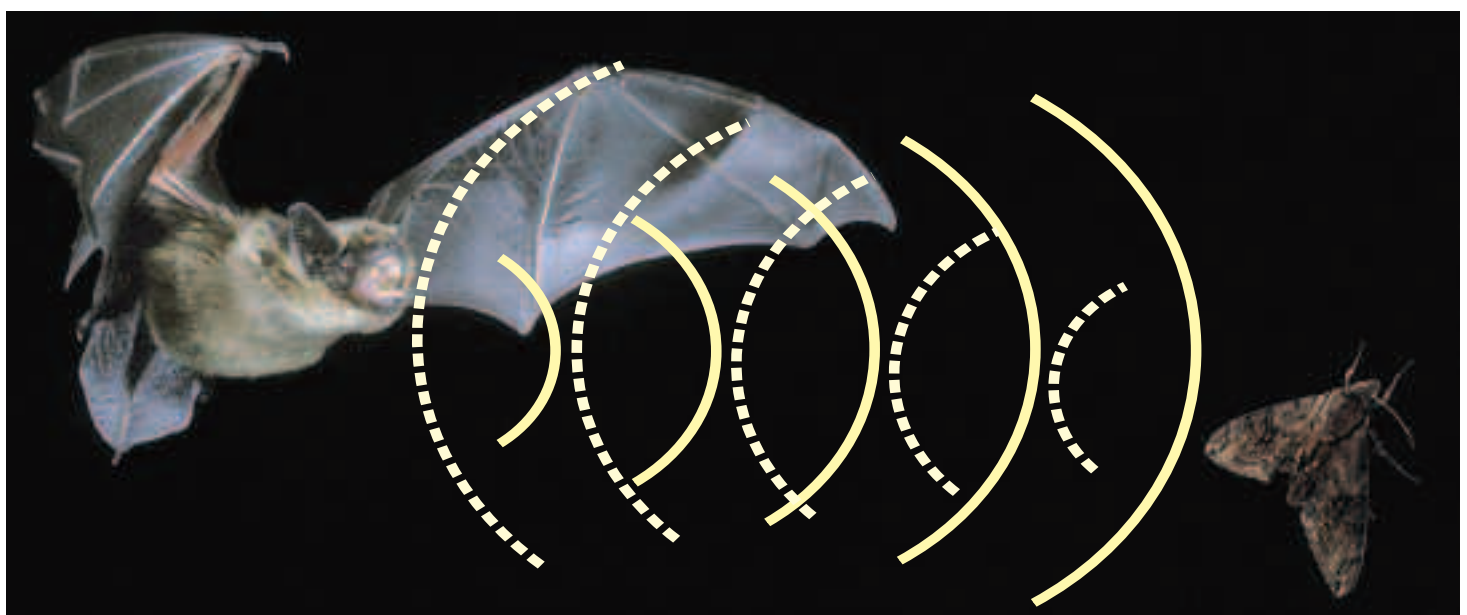
Involving groups or individuals who rely less on sight than their other senses seems an appropriate link to make when working with bat

conservation. In a conservation sector that relies mostly on hearing to appreciate bats, it seems beneficial to involve people who use their sense of hearing more than their sight.

Bats make high frequency calls (normally beyond the range of human hearing) and bounce these off their surroundings. They listen to the returning echoes to build up a sound picture of their environment; this system is called echolocation and it enables bats to navigate in the dark and hunt insects.

A bat detector takes the bat's echolocation calls and converts them to a frequency audible to the human ear. It is by these echolocation sounds rather than sight that we identify bat species.

There are varying degrees of visual impairments. Resources appropriate for one individual may not be for others. For this reason BCT needs to provide a range of



resources that cater for a range of access requirements. The bat talk and walk gave an opportunity for BCT to consult with visually impaired people over which resources worked best and what additional resources were needed to take part in bat conservation.

Bat detectors themselves can be adapted to help visually impaired people but if we are to cater for a range of access requirements we need to think about the creation of new designs to accommodate the different needs within this new audience

One of the big challenges for visually impaired people is transportation. By working with a group that could provide their own transport (e.g. The Kingcombe Centre), we removed this barrier and involved this new community with the exciting and audible world of bats and their related conservation challenges.

### Resources:

This pilot project required many new resources to be created and existing resources to be adapted. With the Royal National Institute for the Blind and Action for Blind People, a large print format leaflet was created. From consultation with the visually impaired group who attended the bat walk we were able to gain feedback on how the leaflets needed to be changed for the future in order to be more accessible to a range of visions.

For this project we used two different types of bat detector, one with a large format frequency display and the other being without the large formatting. Both detectors were used with 'Bumpons' (these are plastic markers that can be stuck to everyday objects to feel where positions are). During the bat walk, through consultation with The Kingcombe Centre clients, we were able to identify problems and potential solutions for using both kinds of detector.

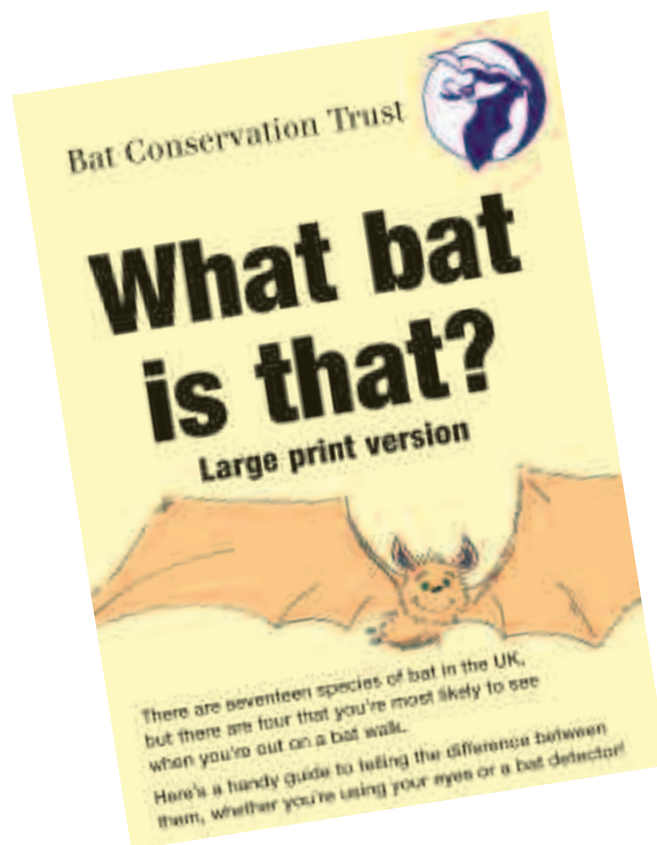
Again in partnership with expert organisations, a raised diagram of a bat was created for participants to feel the anatomy of a bat during the talk.

In partnership with the Centre for Access and Communication Studies, BCT leaflets were translated onto audio tapes.

Slide projectors as we currently use them are inappropriate for this group of people. Consultation showed us that accompanying tactile slides are a necessary resource for visually impaired people to interpret bat talks. A resource like this would be of great value to other groups too and not just those with visual impairments.

### Conclusion:

**Bat groups need support and training to be able to include visually impaired people in their monitoring and surveying of bat populations. With proper thought and involvement of the correct associated organisations such training is available and can be delivered effectively.**



**There is interest and enthusiasm amongst both the visually impaired community and the bat groups to work together to conserve bats. Bat groups require the knowledge and skills to feel confident in involving new and unfamiliar groups with bats. Visually impaired people need the resources to be able to understand the world of bats and how they can be involved in helping to conserve these animals.**

**This project has shown bat groups can make their walks more accessible to those within the visually impaired community. It is a natural link to include people who are less heavily reliant on sight to become more involved in an activity that requires a more honed use of the sense of hearing. Several of the group were already skilled in the art of identifying birds by their calls so there exists the potential to become experts in identifying bats from their echolocation calls.**

**Bat groups have knowledge of other local organisations with whom to build relationships. What they lack is the time to develop these relationships into something tangible and sustainable. The role of an experienced and dedicated Count Bat Project Officer, operating more locally, would be to act as a catalyst and facilitator to making many more such partnerships a reality for the benefit of all involved and our wider natural heritage.**

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