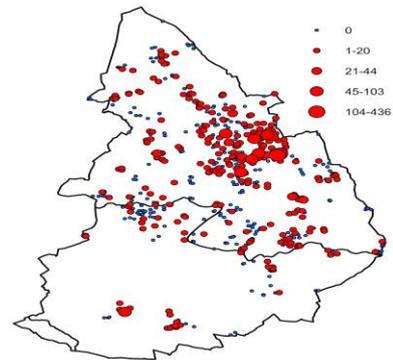


Successful Campaign Award

Shortlisted: Brecks Bat Project



(Picture: Leisler's Bat)



(Map: distribution of Barbastelle in the Brecks)

(Picture: Barbastelle Bat)

The Brecks Bat Project began in 2013, in collaboration with the Norfolk Bat Survey www.batsurvey.org, with fieldwork carried out over five recording seasons and ending in October 2017.

The Breckland Society was already aware of the potential importance of the Brecks for bats, based on the limited fieldwork carried out by specialist bat groups, but we wanted to undertake a more comprehensive and participatory survey of these little-known and often misunderstood mammals. We acquired our own bat recording kit (a passive real-time detector)



and publicised the project as widely as possible before each recording season. No specialist knowledge was required on the part of potential participants who, with the help of Norfolk Bat Survey personnel, were trained so they could use the bat kit themselves at sites of their choice across the area. Using an online portal, participants could select 1-km squares in which to record. They were encouraged to run the kit on 1-3 nights in each square, subsequently sending the kit memory card to the Norfolk Bat Survey Team at the British Trust for Ornithology in Thetford for the downloading of data and its interpretation. Each participant was then sent feedback for their squares, with details of how many bat 'passes' had been recorded by the kit and assigning these to individual species wherever possible.

The objectives of the project were to:

- Engage the community - both Society members and the wider public - in a meaningful and hands-on form of fieldwork that encouraged contact with nature
- Improve public awareness of the ecology and habitat requirements of bats
- Establish an improved overview of the distribution of bats in the Brecks and which species are present where
- Provide concrete data on bat presence to help inform EIAs and decisions over planning applications
- Develop the concept of ‘citizen science’ locally as an enjoyable and valuable way of contributing to better understanding of the environment

Species	Number of recordings	% of total
Common pipistrelle	24,565	45.88%
Soprano pipistrelle	14,730	27.51%
Serotine	998	1.86%
Brown long-eared bat	224	0.40%
Noctule	798	1.50%
Barbastelle	169	0.30%
Leisler's	318	0.60%
Daubenton's	335	0.60%
Nathusius' pipistrelle	28	<0.1%
Natterer's	132	0.25%
Whiskered / Brandt's	10	<0.1%
Unidentified bat species	4,085	7.60%
Pipistrelle species	6,444	12.00%
Myotis species	598	1.10%
Noctule, Serotine and Leisler's	107	0.20%

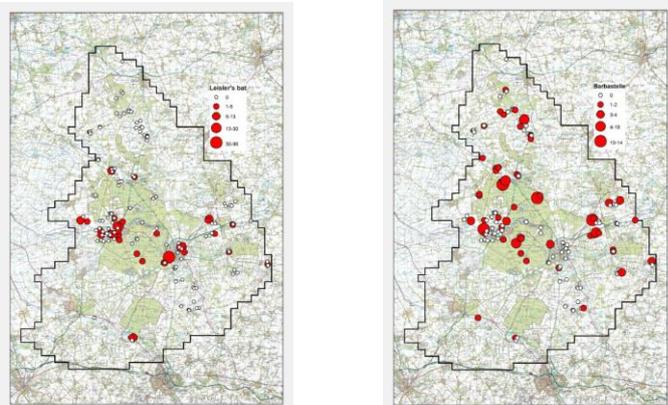
Results from the 2015 Recording Season

The results of the project included:

- 249 x 1-km squares were surveyed for bats in one or more years between 2013-17
- 831 complete nights of bat recording were logged, at 695 different recording locations
- 85 volunteers took part, many of them surveying more than one square
- A total of 200,730 recordings were assigned to individual species
- A total of 11 bat species were recorded, with especially notable concentrations of Leisler's Bat, Barbastelle, Serotine, Daubenton's Bat, Brown long-eared Bat, Natterer's Bat and Soprano Pipistrelle.

The project has transformed understanding of bat distribution and presence in the Brecks and raised levels of public awareness of bats and their conservation needs. It has also demonstrated how ‘citizen science’ can support professional ecologists and land managers. There has been an important community legacy, with some volunteers continuing to record in future seasons and their data contributing to the ongoing wider Norfolk Bat Survey.

Full results of the project were published in the *Journal of Breckland Studies* (September 2018)



(Maps show distribution across the Brecks of (left) Leisler's Bat and (right) Barbastelle Bat)

