



*Great crested newt, Bookham Common 26/7/16, DS*

My introduction to the article under the same title in the previous newsletter serves for this also: This summer Surrey Bat Group is taking part in two harp trapping surveys. The national Nathusius' pipistrelle survey is continuing and a woodland bat survey is being carried out in some counties to try to find out more about the distribution of the Alcathoe bat, *Myotis alcathoe*.

Last newsletter's article took us up to the time when trapping stopped for the birthing period as it is important not to catch bats which are heavily pregnant or are suckling very young babies. Here I carry on from resumption of trapping towards the end of July. As before my reports below give a general view of the surveys so far rather than a complete record of results.

### **Woodland Bat Survey**

One of the main focuses of this survey is the Alcathoe bat, *Myotis alcathoe*. It is one of three species along with whiskered bat, *M mystacinus*, and Brandt's bat, *M brandtii*, which closely resemble each other collectively known by various terms including "small *Myotis*", "whiskered group" or the increasingly used "WABs" (Whiskered/Alcathoe/Brandt's). Any of these caught are retained in cloth bags for a time in the hope that droppings will be forthcoming. Cells from the gut wall adhere to them, from which DNA can be used to identify the species positively.

At Bookham Common, 26 July, a remarkable selection of species was caught including noctule, serotine, brown long eared, Daubenton's bat, Bechstein's bat, common and soprano pipistrelles and two WABs. The first WAB was identified as a whiskered and DNA confirmed it. The second was not thought to be an Alcathoe, partly because it was quite large but in this case DNA showed that it was one. (Although on the large side it was within the range for the species. Also the paleness of the face is an Alcathoe feature.)



*"WAB2" 26/7/16: Alcathoe, photo Derek Smith*



*Bechstein's bat, photo Derek Smith*

In my “WAB2” photo you may *just* be able to see the protocone on the third (large) upper premolar. A large protocone indicates Brandt’s while in whiskered it is small or absent. In Alcatheae it can be prominent, as in Brandt’s. (On a personal note – this is the first photograph I have taken in which a protocone can be seen!)

When bats are released recordings are made of the echolocation calls. At this Bookham Common session John Dixon managed to get some flight shots at the same time.

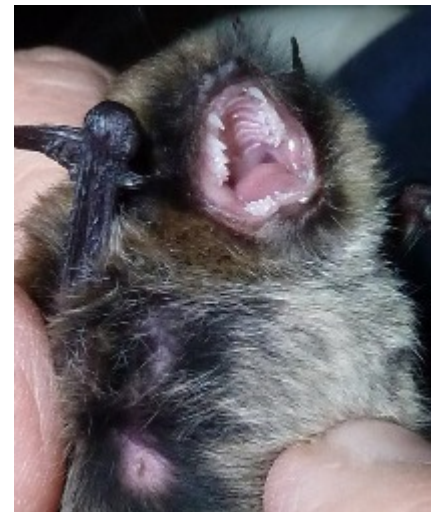


*Brown long eared bat, photo John Dixon*



*Serotine, photo John Dixon*

Another session at Bookham, 5 August, produced one Alcatheae, two whiskered and common and soprano pipistrelles as well as a Natterer’s bat this time. The DNA results confirmed the WAB identification.



*Alcatheae (pale face and tragus base) and whiskered bats, 5/8/16, DS      Lactating whiskered bat, 5/8/16, DS*

Other notable Alcatheae finds were two males at Holmwood Common, 23 August. Martyn Cooke commented on its significance:

“Way back in 2008 Ross Baker and I attended a BCT training course at FSC Juniper Hall near Dorking. The course was to teach us how to use the Sussex Autobat acoustic lure. As part of the course we did a night’s trapping at Holmwood Common. During the night we caught several small *Myotis* bats which we jokingly suggested were Alcatheae bats, recently described in Europe. In 2010 Alcatheae was added to the UK list after several were caught in West Sussex (and Yorkshire). In 2016 Michel Barataud had a look at my release call sonograms from 2008 and without hesitation said “Alcatheae, 100%”.”



## Nathusius' Pipistrelle Survey

The Molesey Reservoirs site has continued to be productive in terms of numbers of Nathusius' pipistrelles caught, for example 17 September producing six which included an adult female and a number of sub-adult males. Trapping at Painshill Park, coinciding with a public bat walk 10 September, was less successful, producing no Nathusius', but at the end of the walk participants were delighted to see a Daubenton's bat and a soprano pipistrelle in the hand. Further trapping that night added a brown long eared bat.

At Ankerwycke, 18 September, Ross Baker and Lynn Whitfield caught a Nathusius' pipistrelle which had been ringed, the ring bearing the number H6667. Within less than 24 hours it was established that it had been ringed earlier this year by Claire Andrews, James Shipman and the Berks and Bucks Bat Group at Theale, 37 km away.

This was exciting but Kent Bat Group had gone one better, 5 August, when a male Nathusius' pipistrelle they caught near Faversham had a ring inscribed JJ00424 Zool Mus Lithuania. After some social media coming and going it was found that it had been caught and ringed at Ventès ragas by V. Petras Eigirdas in September 2015.

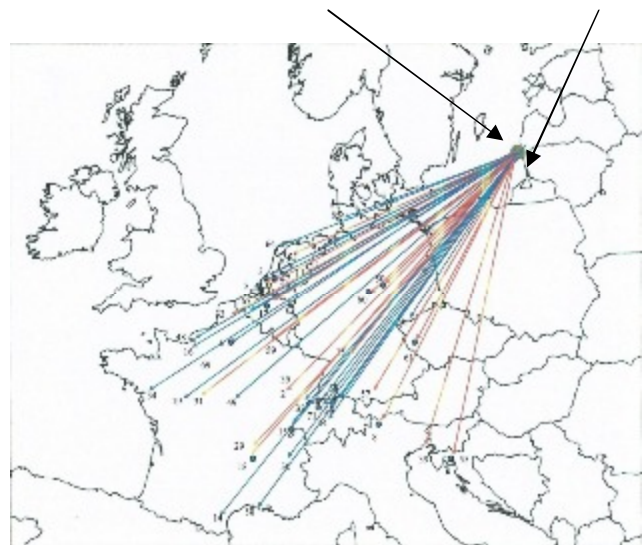
This is reminiscent of last year's finding of a Nathusius' at Rye Harbour Nature Reserve in East Sussex, which had been ringed at Pape in Latvia (see the Winter 2015/2016 issue of this newsletter). Ventès ragas is, like Pape, a coastal bird migration hotspot with Heligoland traps in place to trap migrating birds – and bats. The map below shows ringing recoveries from Nathusius' pipistrelles ringed at Pape (it predates the Rye Harbour recovery). Ventès ragas is not far south of Pape.

*Lithuania*

*Pape, Latvia    Ventès ragas,*



*Nathusius' H6667, photo Ross Baker*



*Nathusius' pipistrelle ringing recoveries*

Derek Smith