

**Birmingham
Natural History
Society**

Founded 1858

Registered Charity No 500819

President: Ms Kat Clifford

Internet address: bnhsoc.org.uk

NEWSLETTER No 105 – January 2015

Lecture Programme 2015 reminder

Friends Meeting House, Selly Oak, starting at 7.30 pm

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| 16 January 2015 | Lisa Worledge – Bats: their biology and conservation |
| 20 February 2015 | Peter Preece – Every picture tells a story |
| 20 March 2015 | Professor Jon Sadler – The ecological impacts of light and sound pollution in cities |
| 17 April 2015 | Presidential lecture: Kat Clifford – Cryptozoology – the search for new species |

Previous speakers

Julia Myatt's talk on locomotor ecology last February included video material on orangutans. This material is part of a 3 min 45 sec video, 'Where do we stand now? The evolution of human bipedalism', produced by Julia, found at www.youtube.com/watch?v=qSaYFM3e74 - and voted 'Doctoral research video of the year 2010'.

For members who would like to see more photographs by **Ian Whitehead**, who talked to us last October - from France, Spain, Italy and Norway, as well as the Western Cape - have a look at <http://www.ianwhitehead1.webspace.virginmedia.com/TalksIndex.htm>

Peter Shirley recommends 'Where do camels belong? The story and science of invasive species', by Ken Thompson (Profile Books, 2014; ISBN 978 1781251744) which touches on points Peter made in his talk to the Society in November regarding the scientific inconsistency on attitudes towards non-native species. There is a review from the journal *ECOS: A Review of Conservation* at <http://banc.org.uk/sites/default/files/Book%20reviews%20ECOS%2035%20%282%29.pdf>

New internet addresses

Please note that the Society has changed its internet address, which is now bnhsoc.org.uk, and the Warwickshire Fungus Survey is now at <http://wfs.bnhsoc.org.uk/>

To contact the Hon Secretary or to provide copy for the next Newsletter:

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SAVE paper, printing and postage costs: could members let me know if they would be happy to receive the Newsletter by email. Many thanks to those who have already done this.

Bats in Birmingham and the Black Country

In anticipation of Lisa Worledge's talk to the Society on 16 January here are some comments on the bats found in our region. Lisa will be telling us much more!

The West Midlands generally are particularly interesting for bats because the region lies at important north/south and east/west cross-over points: the ranges of some of the rarer, more southerly British species just tip into the area, and we also sometimes get species more associated with eastern counties.

Many of us will have seen bats even in built-up areas. The region contains a number of important hibernation roosts, particularly in Dudley, but our canal tunnels, parks, woodland and gardens all support bats throughout the year.

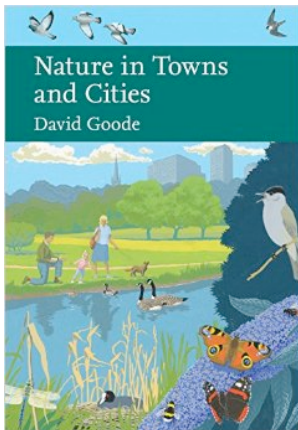
Records of bats in the region are kept by EcoRecord, and there have been records of ten out of the sixteen UK breeding species over the last twenty years: common pipistrelle, soprano pipistrelle, brown long-eared bat, noctule, serotine, Leisler's bat, Daubenton's bat, whiskered bat, Brandt's bat and lesser horseshoe bat.

Numbers of all species have been declining for many years, so we need to protect them and enhance their habitats. All of our bats are included as European protected species and are covered by UK and European legislation. Members will be aware of the need to ensure that any bats found in buildings must be undisturbed, and that a licence is needed before legitimately handling these animals.

Central to bat conservation and care in the region are BrumBats see brumbats.wordpress.com who are undertaking a seven-year project – aiming to be completed in 2020 – to survey and map the bats of Birmingham and the Black Country at tetrad (2 km X 2km) level.



BNHS Council has agreed in principle to provide financial support for this enterprise.



Nature in cities and towns (Collins New Naturalist, 127). This latest and long-awaited book in the New Naturalist series was published towards the end of last year and is now in the Society's library.

David Goode is a visiting professor at the Environment Institute, University College London, and was formerly Senior Ecologist at the Greater London Council, Director of the London Ecology Unit and subsequently Head of Environment at the Greater London Authority.

Stephen Moss in his *Guardian* review of the best nature literature of 2014 called this 'probably the finest work on urban ecology ever written'.

This is not just an exploration of natural history within the urban environment – Professor Goode also describes the range of habitats and species that exist within urban areas, and shows how our increasing understanding is being applied to encourage a greater variety of nature into the built environment. He illustrates how an ecological approach can be incorporated within planning and design to create a range of habitats from tiny wildlife oases to extensive new urban woodland and wetlands.

The book is divided into three sections - Urban Habitats, Colonisers and Specialists, and Urban Nature Conservation. Birmingham and the Black Country are an important part of the nature conservation story, partly because the region has some really important sites of significance for natural history in its broadest sense – we had the first urban National Nature Reserve in Wren's Nest (designated in 1956 for its geological importance, but including valuable habitat) and Sutton Park – the seventh largest urban park in Europe – most of which having been given NNR status in 1997. There are, of course, many other places of importance not just for nature itself, but as part of the story of nature conservation, for instance Moseley Bog and Rowley Hills, which get due mention.

And also because, arguably (London inevitably disagrees) the region saw the birth of the UK's first 'urban wildlife group', in 1980, with the creation of the organisation of that name, now of course The Wildlife Trust for Birmingham and the Black Country. There is a sizeable section on the work of the Trust but disappointingly, though understandably in the wider context of this monograph, the role played by our Society (founded in 1858) and our sister group the Sutton Coldfield NHS (1919, revived 1951) - especially in recording fungi, plants and Lepidoptera - is unmentioned. There is some carelessness in the indexing (look up adder and adder's tongue fern, for instance, which repeat each other). And there is some terminology that readers might take issue with, for example the use of 'town pigeon' for 'feral pigeon', and issues relating to the terminology of and values placed upon introduced plants and animals mentioned by Peter Shirley in his talk to us last November.

No matter. This is a wonderful book in content and illustration.

Peter Jarvis