

Bat Conservation Trust



Newcastle
City Council



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20 July 2009

Moorbank Botanic Garden gets people batty about bats

Bats are one of Britain's most misunderstood animals- most of the myths about bats are simply not true! To de-mystify the mysteries about bats and show people what fascinating creatures they really are, Moorbank Botanic Garden is having a 'Bat in the Garden' open day on Sunday 26 July.

The open day has been organised as part of the Count Bat project run by the Bat Conservation Trust (BCT), in partnership with Open Air Laboratories (OPAL), Newcastle City Council and the Northumberland Bat Group. Count Bat is a nationwide project, supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund, to inspire a more diverse range of people to get involved in conserving bats.

The bat garden open day is being hosted at the Botanic Garden, part of Newcastle University, by OPAL – a project that aims to encourage people to get outside and explore, study and protect their local environment. It is funded by the Big Lottery Fund and is running initiatives all over England, including Newcastle and the North East.

People of all ages are encouraged to come along to the free event, where visitors can take a tour of the garden and follow the bat-plant trail to find out about bat-pollinated plants including mangrove and banana. There will also be the opportunity to meet a local bat expert and take part in batty art and craft activities.

Diana Hagues, Count Bat Project officer at BCT, said "Bats are a vital part of our native wildlife, and are widely recognised as indicators of a healthy environment. British bats play an important role as top predators of common nocturnal insects and our 17 species of bats account for almost a third of all mammal species in the UK. Today there are fewer bats than ever and they desperately need our help."

The Open Day will take place between 11am and 4pm. Moorbank Botanic Garden is located on Claremont Road, about 20 minutes walk from the city centre and next to the Cat and Dog Shelter.

Over the next two years, the Count Bat project will be running further bat events across Newcastle to raise awareness of the plight of bats and encourage people to take part in bat activities. People wanting to learn more about bats will be able to attend an introductory to bats workshop at Moorbank Botanic Garden on Sunday 2nd August.

For information about the open day or how to book a place on the workshop, please contact Katy Barnard, Moorbank Education Officer, on 07902 647633, email katy.barnard@ncl.ac.uk.

To find out more about the Count Bat project, visit www.bats.org.uk/countbat, and the OPAL project, visit www.OPALexplorenature.org

Fantastic bat facts:

- There are currently 17 species of bats in the UK, 10 of which can be found in Northumberland.
- Bats and their roosts are all protected by national and European law due to the dramatic decrease in their numbers.
- Bats are unique to the natural heritage as they are the only true flying mammal and are a crucial part of the UK 's delicately balanced biodiversity.
- A single pipistrelle bat can eat 3,000 insects in the evening whilst a colony of bats eats millions of insects over the summer months.
- Bats only have one baby at a time and can live up to 30 years.
- Bats are more closely related to people than mice.

- The term 'blind as a bat' is totally inaccurate – bats can see but mainly use a sonar system called 'echolocation'. This is above the range of human hearing, but can be heard by people using a 'bat detector'.

For press enquiries, please contact:

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Notes for Editors:

1. BCT is the only national organisation solely devoted to the conservation of bats and their habitats in the UK. It helps to support a network of almost 100 local bat groups.
2. The Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) awarded a £596,000 grant in October 2007, for the four-year 'England Count Bat' Project.
3. HLF enables communities to celebrate, look after and learn more about our diverse heritage. From our great museums and historic buildings to local parks and beauty spots or recording and celebrating traditions, customs and history, HLF grants open up our nation's heritage for everyone to enjoy. HLF has supported more than 26,000 projects, allocating over £4billion across the UK. Website: www.hlf.org.uk. For more details, please contact: Katie Owen, HLF press office, on (020) 7591 6036 or 07973 613820/07973 613820
4. Open Air Laboratories (OPAL) is a nation-wide partnership initiative that will inspire communities to discover, enjoy and protect their local environments. It aims to create a new generation of nature-lovers by stimulating interest through local and national projects which are accessible, fun and relevant to anyone who wants to take part. Visit www.OPALexploreNature to find out more.

5. The Big Lottery Fund's Changing Spaces programme was launched in November 2005 to help communities enjoy and improve their local environments. The programme funds a range of activities from local food schemes and farmers markets, to education projects teaching people about the environment. Imperial College London (the leading OPAL partner) was awarded a £11,760,783 Changing Spaces grant in August 2007. Full details of the work of the Big Lottery Fund, its programmes and awards are available on the website: www.biglotteryfund.org.uk
6. For information about bats in Northumberland and the Northumberland Bat Group, see www.northumberlandbats.org.uk
7. BCT operates the Bat Helpline on **0845 1300 228**, providing advice for all who come into contact with bats. More information can be found on the BCT's website, www.bats.org.uk