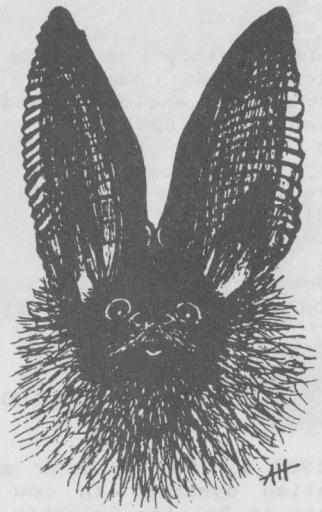
FIELDWORK UPDATE

NATIONAL BAT SURVEY

Once again in 1991, several members of the bat group have been involved in the National Bat Survey. This is a three year project organised by Dr. stephen Harris of Bristol University. Participants are required to walk a 1 kilometer square transect (picked at random by computer) three times over the summer months, recording bat activity (and species if possible), along the way. The transect walk must begin approximately 30 minutes after sunset, so by the end it's usually pretty dark, and it's a good idea to check out any ditches, ponds, or unsociable fencing in the daylight before you begin! Factors such as temperature and cloud cover are recorded, along with bat activity (just flying, or feeding buzzes) and sightings. Roosts in the square are also recorded.

Bat detectors are used to record bat activity, which prompts me to impart some information which may prove useful to other transect walkers. The transects are usually walked in pairs, but I personally just take along my faithful dog as a companion. However, some confusion occurred on my first walk when an invisible bat appeared to be flying around me as soon as I switched on the detector! I finally tracked down the 'bat', which turned out to be the metal tag on the dog's collar banging against a metal fastener, making a perfect niose for a bat detector to pick up! The offending tag was removed and we batted on in peace.



Along with the activity recording, a habitat survey is carried out, using habitat codes from an extensive list provided especially for this purpose. This gives an idea of how bats use their surrounding habitat and their preferences for feeding sites and flight paths. The survey will hopefully provide a picture of how bat numbers change nationally over the three years, and, as 1992 is the last year of the survey, there's still time to take part in some transects this summer. Contact the Bat Group for details...

Ann Hanson

THE DENIS ASPINALL MEMORIAL TRAP: GARBUTT WOOD

28/29 SEPTEMBER 1991

Garbutt Wood is a nature reserve leased from the Forestry Commission by the Yorkshire Wildlife Trust (YWT). Situated just north of Sutton Bank on the edge of the Hambleton Hills near Thirsk, the reserve forms part of the Lake Gormire SSSI. A conspicuous feature of the reserve is Whitestone Cliff, a sheer face of sandstone some 50 to 70 feet high, beneath which are boulder strewn slopes.

A total of 73 traps were laid on the evening of 28 September, most in the lower area of the reserve but some among the boulders at the base of Whitestone Cliff. The lift at 09.00 hrs on 29 September, was attended by about 15 adults and six children. (The trap was also an open event for members of the YWT in the North-East region). In total, ten of the 73 traps contained five species of mammal.

The species caught were those one might expect in an area of deciduous woodland with open patches of rough herbage. Except, that is, for the weasel (*Mustela nivalis*)! This magnificent, and somewhat miffed, male was found in the lower part of the reserve, where a bank vole (*Clethrionomys glareolus*), a field vole (*Microtus agrestis*), and two field mice (*Apodemus sylvaticus*) were also taken. In the boulder area higher up the reserve, one bank vole, one common shrew (*Sorex araneus*) and three field mice were caught. The shrew sported at least five fleas, which seemed enormous compared to the size of their host.

The trap was voted a great success by those present, and it was particularly pleasing that representatives of shrews, voles and mice were caught, allowing a comparism of their distinguishing features. It is a pleasure to record my sincere thanks to May and Peter Wyon for their kind help and hospitality during the trap.

Geoff Oxford