

Silverlake Conservation & Community Fund

Bat Box Project Marley Wood – Winfrith Newburgh

Project Update March 2024

With thanks to the Silverlake Conservation & Community Fund who generously granted funding for a bat box project in Marley Wood, Winfrith Newburgh and additional thanks to the Lulworth Estate for permission to allow the monitoring and for providing additional bat boxes for the project.

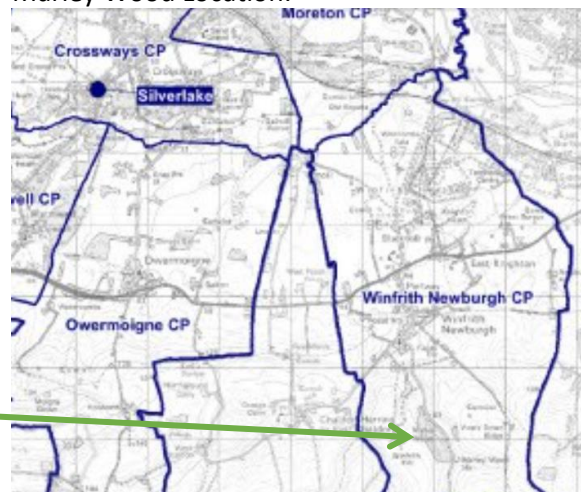
Wood Overview

Marley wood is a privately owned deciduous woodland (43.6 acres) set in an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) in the parish of Winfrith Newburgh, in the Purbeck district. It is located between the villages of West Lulworth and Winfrith approximately 2 miles inland from the south coast. The wood has no public access but is used annually with permission by the local Winfrith and Lulworth Primary School.



- Latitude/Longitude: 50°39'3"N 2°16'37"W
- Eastings/Northings: 380500, 83500
- OS Grid: SY805835

Marley Wood Location:



Project aim

The scheme will allow for a better understanding as to what, and how, protected bat species are using this previously un-surveyed woodland habitat for bat conservation over the next 5 years.

Bat boxes provide a number of valuable roosting opportunities for all bats, particularly the rarer woodland species. The Dorset Bat Group commenced monitoring of the boxes as part of their annual bat box programme. (Once a month for six months May-October).

Timeline of activities to date

February 2023

The first 12 bat boxes from the Lulworth Estate were installed.

March / April 2023

Additional 42 bat boxes received and installed, delayed shipment on 12 Eco Kent Bat Boxes

May 2023 – October 2023

Monthly bat box checks, see over for results 😊

August 2023

Remaining 12 Eco Kent bat boxes received for installation Winter 2023

2023 Bat box check results

May 2023

No bats found

June 2023

1 x Common pipistrelle found in box no 10
12 Brown long-eared bats found in box no 12
Fresh bat droppings found in 3 further boxes

July 2023

3 x Brown long-eared bats found in box no 8
Fresh bat droppings found in 5 further boxes

August 2023

No bats found in any boxes
Fresh bat droppings found in 5 further boxes

September 2023

Box checks cancelled due to bad weather

October 2023

9 Brown long-eared bats found in box no 5
1 Pipistrelle bat found in box no 44
9 Brown long-eared bats found in box no 19
2 Pipistrelle bats found in box 27
3 Pipistrelle bats found in box 33
2 Pipistrelle bats found in box 38
Fresh bat droppings found in 13 further boxes



The 2023 season ended on a very positive note with fresh droppings in several of the newly installed boxes suggesting that the Marley Wood bats may have less natural roosting opportunities than first thought. The droppings have not been DNA tested, due to costs, to see what other species are present.

From the analysis of the data so far has shown the wood has a strong population of brown long-eared bats, which have formed into two groups one to the north-west of the wood and the other to the south-west. The distance between the two boxes used is approximately 100m so it would suggest they are likely to be a connected colony. No ringed bats were found to establish further details.

As the greatest number of bats were found in October; which is still within the breeding season, it could be that the wood is used as a mating site, or as a transitional roost; with an abundance of prey present, it was noted that a good number of orange underwing moths were found sheltering in several of the unoccupied bat boxes, this is the main food source of brown long-eared bats whilst building up fat stores before heading off to hibernation sites.

Pipistrelle bats frequently use bat boxes in the mating season too, with male bats being dominantly present, the bat group are looking to extend research into pipistrelle bats as many distinguishing features separating common and soprano pipistrelle bats are now being found in both, suggesting potential cross breeding – this may be a longer term project in which data from Marley Wood could be used to assist.

December 2023 / Jan 2024

Attempts to install the remaining 12 Eco Kent bat boxes has been hampered by ground conditions, and has been delayed until a vehicle is able to access woodland, these will be installed before the bat season of 2024 commences.