



Tony Hutson

1944-2023

We were extremely saddened to hear of the death of one of the founders of the Bat Conservation Trust, Tony Hutson, on the 16th February. As you will see below, in the words written by his friends and colleagues **Professor Paul Racey** and **Peter Lina**, Tony made a huge contribution to

bat conservation throughout his life. He shared his knowledge and passion for bat conservation freely

and with good humour, inspiring generations of bat conservationists. He was a constant, generous and helpful presence to many of us at BCT (most recently with an episode of the BatChat podcast) and we knew him as a friend. We will all miss him, and his death is a huge loss.

Tony's interest in natural history began as a schoolboy in the early 1950s. Together with his friend John Burton, he joined the New Naturalists Club at the London Natural History Museum and met some bat experts. They moved on to the London Natural History Society in 1958 and became involved in mammal surveys, including bats. They obtained ringing permits and began ringing bats in Kent. They also travelled to the Isles of Scilly and caught long-eared bats on St Agnes. On leaving school, Tony asked the museum for a job, hoping to be allocated to Mammalogy but instead found himself in Entomology, where his first bat task was identifying prey from Cheiromeles droppings from Niah cave, Borneo. He specialised in nematoceran diptera and also bat ectoparasites. He went to Ecuador with Bob Stebbings to study bats and their ectoparasites, and was seconded to catch bats in Zimbabwe. At home he continued survey work in Kent and Sussex where he was guardian for twenty years of Britain's only mouse-eared bat *Myotis myotis*. He also worked abroad on Aldabra and the Chagos Archipelago. On one of these visits to an Indian Ocean island, Tony was dropped off alone by the Royal Navy with a radio and instructions to check-in at fixed times. Tony became so absorbed in his survey work that he forgot his radio call and incurred the wrath of the naval officer in charge.

By 1984, John Burton was chief executive of the Fauna and Flora Preservation Society (FFPS) and, aware of the ground swell of support for conserving bats as a result of The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, established a Bat Project. He persuaded Tony to leave his established job at the Natural History Museum to become the UK's first Bat Conservation Officer. Tony was soon asked to produce the equivalent of the European Birds Directive for bats. His efforts eventually led in 1991 to the Eurobats Agreement and Tony has detailed that long and sometimes difficult path in EUROBATS Publication #1.

The Bat Project produced species leaflets and other resource materials to support the growing number of bat groups which soon became an unofficial consortium 'Bat Groups of Britain' (BGB). Tony edited the quarterly Bat News 1984-1998 which was of huge value in keeping bat workers informed.

BGB was funded by FFPS, World Wildlife Fund (WWF), Nature Conservancy Council, and Vincent Wildlife Trust who gradually withdrew their funding and eventually Tony was made redundant. Burton stepped in and

convened a meeting which led to the establishment of BCT in 1990, which coincided with the publication of a well-illustrated Field Guide to British Bats, by Tony and Frank Greenaway.

At first Tony was unsalaried and working from home but negotiated a setting-up grant for BCT from WWF and found its first office in Covent Garden. In 1993, he produced an Action Plan for Conservation of Bats in the UK, which identified the need for population monitoring of British bats. This led to the establishment of the National Bat Monitoring Programme, negotiated by Tony with the Department of the Environment, which continues to this day.

Although Tony's primary focus was on national bat conservation, he never lost sight of global issues and was co-compiler of two very influential IUCN Action Plans – on *Old World Fruit Bats* (1992), and *Microchiropteran Bats* (2001), which continue to be highly cited.

Shortly after BCT was established, Tony was asked to write a Collin's New Naturalist book on bats and was very disappointed when he had to decline as he could not be spared at such a critical time in BCT's development. Decades later, the Natural History Museum asked him for a monograph on bats which was published last year and is a fitting tribute to his encyclopaedic knowledge of bats, always freely shared. Tony played a pivotal role in the establishment and development of BCT and EUROBATS. He was popular throughout the global bat conservation community and will be sorely missed.



Tony 'Batson'. Photo taken by the late Brian Pitkin and kindly shared by his wife Linda Pitkin