

A map of pubs, and bats found using a bat detector between March and mid-May 2021



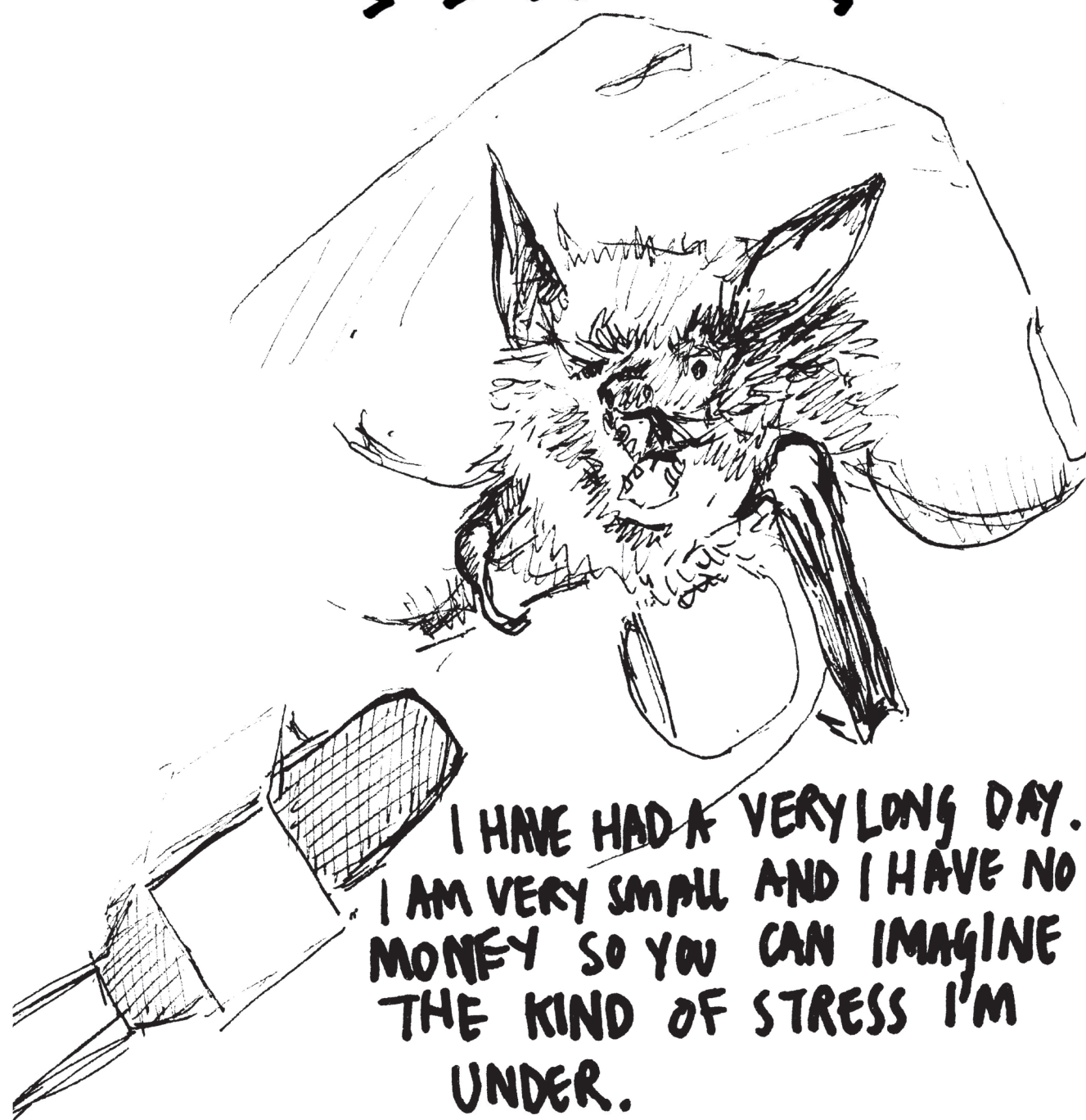
THIS IS

Sita, the Daubenton's bat, Sita Pieraccini
Noah, the Noctule bat, Noah Tomson
Oskar, the Brown Long-eared bat, Oskar Kirk Hansen
Charlie the Common Pipistrelle, Leonor Estrada Francke
Craig, the Soprano Pipistrelle, Adam Todd

Bartender, Megan Rudden

Music, Adam Todd
Recording engineer, Jack Walker
Field recording (pubs), Ryan Frame
Field recording (bats), Timothea Armour

Script and editing, Timothea Armour



MOTH DEATH

Thanks to:

Edinburgh Sculpture Workshop; Rebecca Lilley for bat guidance and lending me a bat detector; Esme Armour and Yasmine Akamune Miles for research, insight and inspiration. This is Moth Death is based on The Neighbours are Bats, an ongoing project by Esme Armour, Timothea Armour and Yasmine Akamune Miles.

MEET THE CAST



Sita, the Daubenton's bat is sturdy but fluffy, an old punk who gets on with everyone. and is especially fond of damp, ex-industrial places like canals, old mine-shafts, tunnels and bridges. Daubenton's bats are reasonably common and widespread in Scotland, although they don't tend to roost in buildings. They feed by skimming low over slow flowing water taking insects from the air and water's surface with their big hairy feet.

Echolocation: 35-85khz, series of dry clicks
Favourite bands: The Undertones, The Clash
Favourite Leith pubs: The Pond or The Central Bar

Oskar, the Brown Long-Eared Bat is quite particular Particular and likes to think of themselves as a bit more refined than the other bats, a fan of flamboyant dressing and the New Romantics. Brown Long-Eared Bat Brown long-eared bats are common in Scotland. They often roost in buildings with lots of attic space, such as churches, which give them time to fly around to get ready before heading out for the night. Moths are an important part of their diet and they have to echolocate quietly so as not to alert their prey.

Echolocation: 25-50khz, very quiet clicks
Favourite bands: The Human League, The Cure
Favourite Leith pubs: Woodland Creatures, The Malt and Hops



Noah the Noctule Bat seems tough and gregarious but isn't a fan of city living. She likes big open spaces, cider and the dance tent at festivals. The noctule is the biggest, noisiest and fastest bat in Scotland. It can fly at 30mph, it shouts four times louder than the legal limit for a nightclub and is bold enough to emerge before sunset. They live in the south of Scotland where they (as far as we know) roost exclusively in trees.

Echolocation: 20-45kz, choppy and bubbly
Favourite bands: The Prodigy, 808 State
Favourite Leith pub: Would prefer some cans in Pilgrim Park

Craig the Soprano Pipistrelle and Charlie the Common Pipistrelle can be difficult to tell apart but they echolocate at slightly different frequencies and have slightly different preferences. They both like to roost in buildings and hunt small insects in gardens and parks but Common pipistrelles are a little tougher and can be found further North. Common and Soprano Pipistrelles are the most common bats in Scotland, but don't tell Craig, he thinks his taste is a bit less mainstream. They're both pretty easy going although sometimes get in each other's way.



Echolocation: Sounds the same as Common Pip. but at 55-80khz.
Favourite bands: Franz Ferdinand, Mogwai
Favourite Leith pubs: The Dreadnought, Campervan Taproom

Echolocation: 45-70khz, clicks and slaps, kind of jazzy
Favourite bands: The Proclaimers, whatever's in the charts
Favourite Leith pubs: The Foot of the Walk, The Windsor Buffet



This is Moth Death - a radio play for five bats and one bartender

PRELUDE

Five friends, who are in a band called Moth Death, have just finished their band practice and are on the way to the pub.

Field recording: *A blackbird sings which echoes a little on the old railway path, everything else is quiet. A bicycle bell rings and a bicycle passes. Soft white noise begins with a click. This is the bat detector being turned on. There's rattling wet clicks that roll into little zips and buzzes. There are some other birds too, then running water, the Water of Leith. Clicks so frequent they sound like creaks, undoing a tent zip, the last few seconds of a bouncing ping pong ball before it stops moving.*

Noah: 1,2,3,4!

All: Moth death moth death moth death moth death. MOTH DEATH.

[Music: The opening electric guitar riffs of a fuzzy, pop-punk tune, whooping.]

Sita: The harmony on those frequencies was nice!

Craig: 45 and 55 kilohertz sounding good.

Charlie: Yesssss 45 and 55!

Sita: Oskar was getting a bit lost though?

Oskar: I think you would notice if I wasn't there.
Sita: I think we need to practice that bit with the line about coming out of hibernation too, everyone was a bit out of sync

Noah: Needs a bit more in the lower frequencies. I reckon.

Charlie: Sound like something you would say Noah

Craig: That does sound like something Noah would say.

Field recording: *Bat detector; bubbling in a cartoon science lab - these are Noctules.*

[Music: a continuation of the same song]

SCENE I

The bats have arrived at the pub. It's a medium-sized pub and a medium sized crowd of drinkers; Thursday night maybe. Most of the floor is carpeted although the floor along the bar is linoleum. The carpet is patterned, tartan, maybe. It's cosy, but not too cosy. The furniture and the decor traditional in the way that makes it impossible to tell if it's been like that for 50 years or 5.

[Weeknight pub chatter and the final pint of a round of drinks being poured.]

Bartender: Okay, that'll be £18.30 please pal*

Sita: Actually some Mealworm Crispies too please. Plain... No, spicy.

Bartender: [To Sita] Right, yep, here you go. [To listener] There's no button on the till for mealworms. Just put them through as crisps. [To Sita] That's £19.30 then.

Sita: Cheers!*

[Sita returns to table.]

Bartender: Oh, they come in every week, after their band practice. They're alright, even though they do get a bit of a bad rap. But they've never got stuck in anyone's hair here! Or anywhere, I reckon. They're okay, the little one with the big ears always leaves moth and beetle wings all over the table but apart from that they're no bother. So long as you're not a midgie or a moth. Not like the badgers that come in on Sundays...

[Pub sounds continue]

[Distracted, talking whilst cleaning.] That's Sita. Yeah, she does look a bit menacing... The giant feet. But she's a gentle soul really... Looks out for her pals. Although I did see her hunting over the canal once. You wouldn't want to be a bug then. A Daubenton's Bat. Her and the one drinking the cider - Noah - look massive compared to the other three. I was kind of... intimidated by Noah at first, but she's mainly just loud. The biggest bat you'll find in Scotland. A Noctule.

Noah: Pints! Pints! Pints!

Bartender: [tutting] Actually, the loudest too... Her echolocation, when she's out hunting, would be louder than a nightclub, if we could hear it.

Sita: Okay, so cider, that’s for Noah, a G&T for Oskar. A pint of IPA that’s yours Charlie, half pint of the double-hopped one, that’s Craig aaaand a Tennents, that’s mine. And I’ve got some snacks too.

Noah: Who’s got change for the Jukebox?

Craig: Depends what you’re putting on?

Noah: I’ll pick something good, trust me.

Sita: Hmm, I’ve got a a bit of change from the mealworms, how much is it?

Noah: If you put a pound in you get five songs.

Charlie: So we can all choose one then!

Oskar: Ah I suppose I should offer this 50 pence. Here.

Noah: 10p anyone?

Craig: Here!

Sita: Okay, alright then

Noah: Me me me I’ll go first... A... 2..0...3!

[Something by the prodigy starts playing]

Noah: Yeah, come on!
Sita: Y’know I’m not into much of this sort of stuff but I can get on board with this.

Noah: Not bad for an old punk.

Charlie: [teasing] Are we at a rave now?

Craig: No we are not at a rave now. This is some pretty mainstream dance music really isn’t it? An actual rave...

Oskar: I don’t know this!

Craig: How do you not know this?!

Oskar: It’s a bit loud for me... Just for this particular pub situation... I’d prefer something more

Sita: Okay, you put yours on next then

Oskar: Argh, oh I can never think of anything... Actually, I know. Let me see if they’ve got...

Charlie: Ohh I know what I want can I go next?

[Sound of BLE flipping through jukebox]

Bartender: Oskar’s a Brown Long Eared Bat. The ears are... pretty distinctive. They’re quite picky too, literally - delicately swipe a moth off a leaf before it’s even noticed sort of picky. Actually so elegant!

Oskar: [disgruntled] They only had ‘don’t you want me baby’...

Charlie: Woo-oah!

Craig: Were you after some Human League deep cuts?

Sita: I bet Bertie’s would have had some better ones. They used to have the Fall on the jukebox!

Craig: Oh man I miss going there

Noah: What’s it called now?

Oskar: Oh god, something quite cringey.

Craig: Let’s not talk about that it’s making me sad.

Sita: Who still needs to pick a song?

Charlie: Me! can you see if they’ve got -

Noah: Who wants to live like Common Pipistrelles?

CP and SP together:...Haha. Oh verrry funny. [Etc.]

Bartender: Those two. Craig and Charlie. They’re cousins. Sort of. Common and Soprano Pipistrelles. Maybe they get fed up of people finding it hard to tell them apart but it’s tricky. They have different habits - and preferences - though. You’ll see...

Noah: No but really, a house with roaches climbing the wall? Breakfast in bed!

Craig: Oh go on then, I bet they’ve got Disco 2000. Let’s have that one.

Charlie: I thought it was my -

Craig: We all know you like everything.

Charlie: That’s not true!...

INTERLUDE:

Bartender: I’m surprised they’ve not split up yet. [knowingly] Over musical differences.

[pause]

Well, yes, the arguing. But also echolocation. It’s how they hunt and find their way around in the dark. That’s what I meant about Noah, the Noctule, being loud. It’s different to when they’re just chattering away to each other. Shouting into the night and then listening for what echoes back. But they all do it at different frequencies.

She was on Springwatch a few years ago. No, not an interview. Hang on a sec, I’ll find it on Youtube...

[A Youtube video, played off a phone :

Oh, here they come.. Can just pick them up now on the thermal camera! Daubenton’s Bats! These are the water specialists [...] You know it’s astonishing how that bat detector changes the mood of an otherwise peaceful evening by the river into a scene of absolute carnage. Really extraordinary stuff.] [Music: More of the same riff but getting a little faster now.]

Field recording: *The bat detector and a river. These are the pipistrelles again, the rolling clicks like dropping a box of marbles down a flight of stairs.*

SCENE II

[The pub sounds continue, maybe the chatter is a little louder now.]

Craig: I was thinking of trying that new place at the weekend. Looks like it’ll have some interesting beers on.

Charlie: I bet it’s dead expensive.

Sita: Yeah, you know what I was saying the other day about how much it’s changed round here...

Craig: She likes Wetherspoons though!

Charlie: I just don’t see the point of getting hung up on authenticity... Nothing wrong with somewhere, just because it’s been recently done up. I’ve been saying this for years, but no, you lot keep going on about ‘old growth’ this, ‘ivy covered’ that. No need to be snobby about a cheap breakfast and some Wimpey Homes barge board

Craig: I agree! But I think you do need to be a bit more selective... About pubs and roosts.

Sita: Alright, I guess they do have lots of space inside... You can take the pups in there, so when it’s your turn to stay in at the maternity roost...

Noah: You know I like clubs more than pubs really... You need space for dancing!

Craig: Noah, you’ll like this new place, they have tequila. Made with bat-friendly agave, actually.

Oskar: The thought makes me feel a bit exposed, to be honest... Would prefer some wood panelling and a cosy snug, mood lighting, but... I suppose my nights out are a bit slower.

Noah: I used to love a night in the old Port of Leith, I’ve not been back there since they did it up.

Sita: Has anyone been to The Pond recently? Is that still there..?

Craig: It’s up for sale. I think the beer garden might be getting turned into flats.

Charlie: Noooo! Not the actual pond!

Sita: Plenty of snacks to go with your pint in the summer.

Oskar: It was just a little bit far away from things though...

Noah: I never minded, It’s worth a bit of a long flight for a good night out! I liked that place.

Sita: I like that ex-industrial sort of area. Old railway lines, tunnels and bridges...

Charlie: What was that place we played on tour that time? Near all the canals!

Sita: Canals! Love a good canal.

Craig: That was in Salford. Some great bits of wasteland - nice and dark.

Noah: What about a some outdoor festivals this summer? Somewhere with woods and a pond... Open fields! Could suit all of us. Yeah? Are we trying to book any festival dates this summer? Who was going to look into that...?

Charlie: You should ask The Nathusias about that.

Noah: The what?

Craig: You know, The Nathusias. You should ask them about it. We played with them in London last year. They migrate all across Europe.

Oskar: Ah, a European tour! I would love that. Exploring some historic architecture... [continues to describe a favourite historic building/city or list favourite European holiday destinations]

Sita: I’ll send them a message, they might have some advice on touring visas.

Charlie: What about that festival that’s sponsored by that rum company? They’d probably have us.

Craig: Just because of the bat thing. They probably would have us though.
Sita: It’s not a bad connection! They do some good work, they have bat boxes at the bottling plants.

Oskar: I’m not very fond of rum myself. But they need us.

Bartender: Bats are pollinators, and pest control. If it’s not going well for them, it’s not going well for us.

Field recording: *White noise again, and little impatient-sounding quacks. Those are the social calls of bats, not echolocation, but the sounds you might be able to hear if you’re young enough. A lone Noctule makes a rhythmic, choppy sound. A bit like... dubstep heard from a few streets away? Tuning up a little through the frequencies, a Daubenton’s bat, the sound of someone running a brush down venetian blinds. Then back up to more Noctules, rhythmic bathtub farts.*

[The song continues, the night continues.]

SCENE III

Oskar: You know what I find really quite upsetting? When pubs have false ceiling beams, ones that have been stuck on to the ceiling and in fact offer nothing to the structural integrity of the place. At a glance you think - that looks like a good ceiling to roost in! But then, oh no - ! No rafters here!

Charlie: They wouldn’t want you roosting in here anyway. No one wants like... bits of moth falling in their pints...

Oskar: I am not even going to begin on barn conversions.

Sita: That’s different though... Hmm, it’s something that’s changed in purpose so it’s just of no use to you anymore?

Craig: Not like the fake beams, which are just pretending to be something they’re not?

Oskar: Habitat loss is always someone’s gain.

Sita: I think repurposing can be good too - like the old railway tunnel I’ve been living in. I wouldn’t be able to do that if there were still trains running down there.

Charlie: Why wait for people to move on, just move in! You know there’s not much they can do once we’re there...

Bartender: She’s right actually. Bats are a protected species. Yes that does make last orders difficult sometimes.

Sita: Actually, Islington Mill that you mentioned earlier. It’s not a mill anymore - we played a gig there!

Charlie: You do love some weird, damp places...

Sita: I don’t mind sharing space! I think you’ve got to share sometimes, no?

Noah: I find it very hard to share with every flipping songbird.. I mean at least it’s not parakeets like in London but still... There’s just not enough space in the trees. [GETTING ANNOYED] I don’t see how that’s good for anyone!

Craig: Someone’ll be benefitting... They’re just not here.

Bartender: It all gets a bit... Animals of Farthing Wood in here on a weeknight sometimes.

Charlie: You just get used to things though don’t you?

Noah: I’m not all small and tiny like you! I don’t fit in between roof tiles! I need open space!

Craig: Alan is way worse where we are though!

ALL: Oh, god, Alan [or words to that effect]

Oskar: I’m always complaining to the Council about Alan. I need to get some new hobbies.

Sita: That’s why I like it down the canal so much, or down here on the cycle paths actually. Not too much Alan.

Charlie: Noah, your commute’s quite long isn’t it?

Craig: How long is it?

Sita: Is it alright?

Noah: I go through the cemetery, that’s not a bad route for avoiding Alan.

[Pause]

Bartender: Alan. A L A N. Artificial Light At Night. And bats do commute, from their roosts to hunting places.
[To bats/louder] That’s last orders at the bar please!

Sita: [finishes pint] Alright, folks, I think it’s time for me to fly.

Noah: Ah come on! Stay for one more!

Craig: Maybe see you at the weekend?

Charlie: Yeah, let’s do something at the weekend!

Craig: That new place...?

Noah: Maybe we could have a few drinks in the park first?

Sita: Okay, alright, what sort of time? 8?

Oskar: I’ll see you there at 9. I need more time than that to get ready.

[Bats exit pub, pub sounds fade out.]

Field recording: *A little zippy buzz. The ‘feeding buzz’ of a bat homing in on an insect.*

Bartender: Right. is that everyone away now? Let’s get all the cleaning done then we can be out of here. Oh no, they haven’t have they? Christ.* I’ve told them about this. Just because it’s basically dust and slightly glittery, ‘not as bad as mouse poo’. Really... Animals!

[The end of the song, credits continue over, fade out after feedback squeal.]

Oskar: See you in hell, motherflappers.

Noah: Flap off!

