



CGO Ecology Newsletter - March 2016 issue

by Alice Quinney & Chris Gleed-Owen

CGO Ecology is a small consultancy, with four permanent ecological staff at present: Chris Gleed-Owen, Noel Bergin, Andrew Fear, and Alice Quinney. We also have a large network of freelance associates to assist with various projects. Here's what we've been up to lately.

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Training and CPD

During the cold winter season, our work quietens down a bit, as it's the season when wildlife is hibernating, trees are dormant, and survey conditions are suboptimal. We ourselves haven't quite gone into hibernation though, and we've been keeping busy. In between report writing and survey work, the CGO team has taken the opportunity to acquire CPD and further our technical, practical and identification skills.

advantage by acquiring training in new skills. Alice and Chris attended courses in hedgerow assessment and winter tree ID, organised by CIEEM and the Species Recovery Trust in Hampshire and Wiltshire. We developed our skills in identifying British native species when not in leaf, and learnt hedgerow survey and evaluation methods using the Hedgerow Regulations 1997 and UK Hedgerows Biodiversity Action Plan.



Smooth snake juvenile found on windfarm survey in Dorset (Photo: Chris Gleed-Owen).



English oak tree in February (Photo: CGO).

Alice also attended a course in Ecological Site Assessment and Report Writing, run by Acorn Ecology in Surrey; and Footprint Ecology's bird disturbance course in Dorset, which examined conservation issues relating to recreational disturbance of birds. These complimented her existing ornithological and Phase 1 habitat survey experience.

Noel has been expanding his bat roost expertise by attending Andrews Ecology's three-day Advanced Bat Tree Roost Survey course in Somerset, learning to identify and search for potential roost features in smaller trees than you would imagine. Noel also successfully completed a Tree Climbing and Aerial Rescue course that focused on rope-access skills, identifying hazards, learning safe techniques for ascent and descent, legislation and LOLER regulations. He is fully kitted-up, and we now offer rope-access bat roost checks in trees.

The winter is generally a quiet time for ecological consultancies, and we took

Noel also gained his City and Guilds NPTC chipper certificate recently. Both courses were run by Dorset Training.

Andy has been especially busy honing his tree survey skills, firstly by completing a BS 5837:2012 course on tree survey for planning, run by Tree Life Arboricultural Consultancy Ltd in Leicestershire. This taught him to identify constraints posed by trees, and produce Arboricultural Impact Assessments (AIAs), Tree Protection Plans and Arboricultural Method Statements (AMS). He also attended a Species Recovery Trust course in Surrey, on Assessing Trees for Bat Potential; and he gained his CS32 certificate for felling trees over 380mm. Lastly, he attended QGIS training with ERT Conservation in Gloucester.

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Phase 1 ecology and tree surveys

We have carried out many Extended Phase 1 Habitat and Ecology surveys during the winter months in Berkshire, Dorset, Hampshire, Leicestershire, London, Nottinghamshire, Warwickshire, Surrey, and Wiltshire. Despite trees being leafless, and few plants in flower, most can be identified vegetatively. These surveys have also enabled skills recently gained during the hedgerow and winter tree identification course to be put into practice in order to identify species in their winter state.



Open eaves on a cottage roof in Surrey, allowing potential access to bats (Photo: Alice Quinney).

A Phase 1 survey carried out on a listed building in central Bournemouth also required a BS 5837 tree survey by Andy. He measured Root Protection Areas, produced an AIA and AMS, checked for bat potential and safety, and categorised trees according to condition, age, and value in a Schedule of Retention.

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Reptile fencing

We recently delivered two reptile fencing contracts in Dorset and Hampshire.

In association with Abbas Ecology Ltd and social housing developers, we carried out vegetation management, site preparation and erection of temporary fencing to exclude reptiles from development areas. As it is an offence to intentionally kill or harm reptiles under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), the fencing prevents harm, and keeps developers within the law.

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Protected species surveys

We've been busy with bat, mammal and invertebrate surveys over the autumn and winter, including some further-flung places that we've been asked to help clients with.



Surveying for molluscs in Rùm, Inner Hebrides (Photo: CGO).

Chris surveyed a site for badgers in Nottinghamshire in December, when setts, runs, hairs, snuffle holes and dung pits are easier to spot. He has also been over to Co Clare in Ireland, monitoring rare snails on a golf resort; and to the Inner Hebrides and Angus, in search of rare slugs and snails for Scottish Natural Heritage, in partnership with our friends at Caledonian Conservation.

Noel is always busy through the winter months carrying out house and tree bat inspections. Our associates elsewhere in the country have also been helping us lately with bat surveys.



Lemon slug at Den of Airlie SSSI in Angus, Scotland (Photo: Chris Cathrine).

Habitat management

Noel and Andy, together with seasonal staff, are our Habitat Management Team. During the winter, they carry out tree felling and scrub clearance. Major projects recently include heathland restoration for Dorset County Council and Forestry Commission.



Heathland restoration in Dorset, as mitigation for A338 road widening (Photo: Noel Bergin).

The team has also created sand lizard egg-laying scrapes, and treated invasive plants with herbicide.

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Plans for 2016

As the spring beckons, the phone is beginning to ring more frequently, and the email inbox is filling up. Despite the harsh Government cutbacks to nature conservation funding, we hope we can still keep our team busy in 2016.

Noel and Alice were in Northamptonshire recently, providing ECoW supervision and bat and bird advice during tree-felling for a country park. This week Alice is carrying out nesting bird surveys for Dorset County Council, prior to scrub clearance.

We have a good clutch of new Phase 1 surveys to carry out, and various ongoing monitoring and mitigation projects to deliver.



Male adders basking in early spring (Photo: CGO).

Andy will soon be spraying Himalayan balsam for a social housing development site; and as always, Noel has various bat mitigation projects. Chris is currently conducting an adder hibernaculum survey for a local authority in Hampshire, and has been dashing about between Dorset, Nottinghamshire, and Warwickshire a lot on Phase 1 surveys.

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And in other news...

We are pleased to announce that Chris' wife Becca had a baby boy, Archie, on 6th January. He and his parents are doing well, and Chris is back at work juggling ecological surveys with nappy-changing. Rumours suggest that Archie will soon be able to identify lizards and snails!

And there must be something in the water, as Andy and his partner Sally have just had a baby girl too! Tess and parents are doing well.

It just seems like yesterday we were having our Christmas meal at the Koh Thai in Boscombe. Fun times.



CGO Ecology Christmas meal (Photo: CGO).

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Office locations

We are primarily based in Dorset, but we have been growing our presence elsewhere in the country lately. We now have bases and landline telephone numbers in Surrey, West Midlands, and Nottinghamshire, to help offer our services further afield.

Through our network of associates, we are able to conduct surveys across the British Isles, typically at short notice with quick turnarounds. Our prices are competitive, and we hope our positive reputation precedes us.

The CGO team is looking forward to working with our existing client base and partners in 2016, and hope to have the pleasure of working with many new ones too. Visit us at www.cgoecology.com, [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).