

Bat's life

By Craig Johnson

When darkness falls, bats take over the skies in ancient Highgate Wood. There are 31 bat boxes there and four in Queens Wood nearby. The bat sanctuary in Highgate tunnels is home to the long-eared Natterer and Daubenton species and is part of an ecological project set up by the Corporation of London and London Underground.

In 1996 LU sent out a bat agent to survey the two parallel disused Highgate rail tunnels using remote sound recording equipment and mist nets. In December 2002 a single Natterer was found inside. In February 2003 more Natterers were found in both tunnels. Four species have been recorded: the Common Pipistrelle, Soprano Pipistrelle, Noctule and Leisler's bat. Occupation is highest during autumn when bats form 'harem roosts' involving a male and one or more females. You can see the black boxes, which are monitored for use each autumn, along flight lines and alongside the edges of the woods. In the spring, females roost and give birth to one baby. By August it is ready to fly and fend for itself.

Batty facts

- Bats live in clean, warm places and hate dust and cobwebs so their Halloween image is inaccurate.
- Bat colonies in houses cause no health risks.
- They do not carry disease and are not blind.
- Bat droppings are dry and turn to dust if rubbed between the fingers, unlike mouse droppings, which are hard and remain solid.
- Bats hibernate during winter in tunnels and caves. Their temperature drops and their heartbeat slows in order to conserve energy.

Bats receive special protection under The Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981). It is illegal not only to kill or injure any bat, but also to damage, destroy, or obstruct access to any place that a bat uses for shelter and protection, or to disturb a bat while it is occupying such a place. Bats should only be handled by specially trained and licensed workers.



Bananas for new bar

By Tom Walker & Louise Wikstrom

The owners of Nahling, the Thai restaurant on the High Road, are to open a stylish new cocktail bar on the site of Bar XL that they hope will attract East Finchley's more sophisticated drinkers.

Mick Rayner, Nahling's owner, is turning the site, on the corner of Lincoln Road, into a continental-style tapas bar called Monkey Face.

He said: "Monkey Face is a literal translation of Nahling, and it will have the same logo. I know there's demand for a good bar in the area because of all the people who come into the restaurant asking for one. The whole High Road will change."

The bar will be aimed at a sophisticated audience, with relaxed leather seating and café tables, as well as an age limit of 21 to keep out the rowdy 'Muswell Hill crowd'.

It will be renovated inside and out, creating a new wood and glass shopfront with outdoor seating and a pair of two-foot-tall wooden elephants.

Monkey Face will have a late licence, opening until 2am on Fridays and Saturdays. There will be a range of music with DJs at the weekend, as well as karaoke nights once or twice a month.

The news comes a month after the closure of Barclays bank, another prominent corner site at the junction of High Road and Fortis Green that also looks set to change hands.

No date has yet been set for the opening of Monkey Face.

Sing out the old, sing in the new

By Erini Rodis

Anyone wanting to turn over a new leaf in the New Year will be able to do it to their own song-sheet. A new course, Songwriting For Beginners, starts in McDonalds headquarters ('hamburger university') next to the tube station on 19 January.

My brother, Chris Rodis, will be course leader. He has been writing songs for years, so what started him off? Chris says, "Listening to songs on the radio and thinking they were really good! I liked words a lot. As a kid I'd make things up while just walking along. Some turned into songs while others remained ramblings. I think people worry too much about being original, so much that they never get started."

The course will be especially useful for anyone already writing songs, or singing covers, or playing an instrument, or writing poetry or lyrics and wanting help to structure them. The style in which the song writing will be taught will be agreed with the group. Chris says, "It's important to understand what different styles there are, possibly as many styles as there are performers."

Chris, who grew up in East Finchley, is already known for his community art projects at the Neighbourhood Centre, The Mix, the Thomas More Centre, the Finchley Youth Theatre and for his work at local primary schools over the years, but this course is particularly poignant for him.

He says, "I clearly remember walking up the hill from the tube station when I was about 13 or 14 years old, making up songs, so it's a delicious prospect that I might be helping others to write songs along the same road!"



Chris Rodis. Photo by Erini Rodis

The Songwriting for Beginners course will be held at 11 High Road from 19 January, running from 7-9pm. Contact the booking office on 020 8455 9951 or visit www.hgsi.ac.uk.

Puzzlers:

Rubbery

Is boneless chicken considered to be an invertebrate?

Taking the mickey

Isn't Disney World a people trap
operated by a mouse?

Non-stick

Why doesn't glue stick to the inside of the bottle?

Throw backs

If man evolved from monkeys and apes, why do we still have monkeys and apes?





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