

PRESS RELEASE: A Call to Explore Exmoor's Hidden Night World

Each Spring since 2005, the Exmoor Society in partnership with the Exmoor National Park Authority holds a prestigious Spring Conference to explore and discuss themes of importance to the National Park. The Covid pandemic has led to the cancelling of the 2021 conference and instead the Society is putting on 4 free one-hour webinars in May on the theme of Nocturnal Exmoor. Each webinar will include a key note speaker, supported by case studies and opportunities for questions for participants during and after the events.

- **7 May: Nocturnal Wildlife.** Keynote speaker on nocturnal mammals, Professor Fiona Matthews; case studies on bats and beavers.
- **14 May: Night and Day.** Tim Dee on bird migration; case studies on night on the farm; night through history.
- **21 May: Dark Arts.** Author Tiffany Francis Baker; case studies by an artist and children's author.
- **28 May: The Night Sky.** Astronomer Jo Richardson; case studies on Exmoor's Dark Skies Festival; tips on night photography.

Setting the scene, Trustee Nigel Hester, said: "Exmoor has a particularly rich wildlife influenced by its geology, topography and geographical position on the south west coast. It is noted for its bats, supporting 16 of the 17 known breeding species in the UK, its butterflies including the rare Heath and Brown fritillaries and for many bird species that inhabit the internationally rare habitats of upland heath, blanket bog and western oak woods. However, a decline in species, as the UK State of Nature Report shows, has not escaped even Exmoor's wealth of wildlife in the last decades, for example, the loss of curlew, ring ouzel and merlin. At the same time, Exmoor's low levels of light pollution was recognized in 2011 by being awarded Europe's first International Dark Sky Reserve. Many species are well adapted to foraging and hunting at night and the dark skies will, no doubt, benefit these including insects, birds and mammals. But we need to find out more about them and the pressures they face as well as helping people to enjoy the night sky."

Recognising the element of experiment Rachel Thomas, Chairman, said: "This is a new venture for the Society but webinars are part of the way forward in reaching a wider audience. National Parks are special places, each Park having a unique character with significant ecological, biological, cultural and scenic values. By concentrating on Nocturnal Exmoor we can demonstrate how all these assets can be protected and yet increase biodiversity and resilience to climate change."

For further details and to book a place, please email The Exmoor Society:

info@exmoorsociety.com or visit www.exmoorsociety.com

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Images: Barn owl at farm park sm – NH.jpg – credit Nigel Hester
Moonrise from Martinhoe sm.jpg – credit Chrissie Wiggins

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