



The Natterer

Spring/Summer 2007



Photograph © Frank Greenaway

Are YOU interested in volunteering in 2007 for the **BROWN LONG-EARED BAT Monitoring Scheme?**

VOLUNTEERS WANTED

Please email tinaaughney@eircom.net to register

TRAINING WILL BE PROVIDED IN MAY 2007



NATHUSIUS' PIPISTRELLE ON THE INCREASE

by Niamh Roche



One of the interesting findings from the Car-Based Bat Monitoring Scheme that was carried out throughout the island in 2006 was the big increase in Nathusius' pipistrelle records. This species of bat is very similar to the two other, more frequently found, common and soprano pipistrelles but differs in being slightly larger with shaggier fur (see picture above). Its echolocation calls peak at about 38 or 39kHz, compared with the common pipistrelle that peaks at about 45kHz and the soprano that peaks at 55kHz.

The Nathusius was first recorded in Northern Ireland in 1996 but it wasn't recorded by the car-based bat monitoring scheme (which

started in 2003) until 2005. Just one record was made that year on the Meath/Cavan border. In 2006, however, the bat was recorded 29 times by the car scheme. Many of the areas it was recorded from in 2006 had been surveyed in three previous years but the bat had not been recorded.

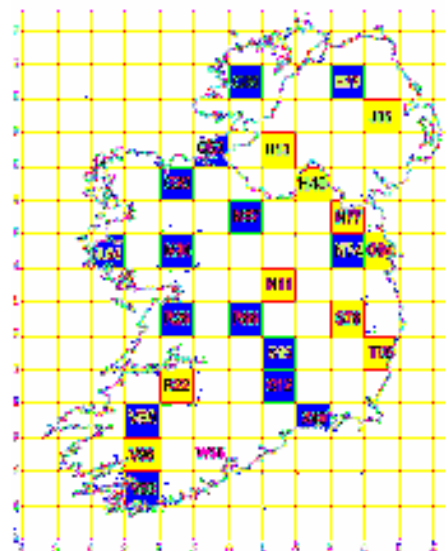
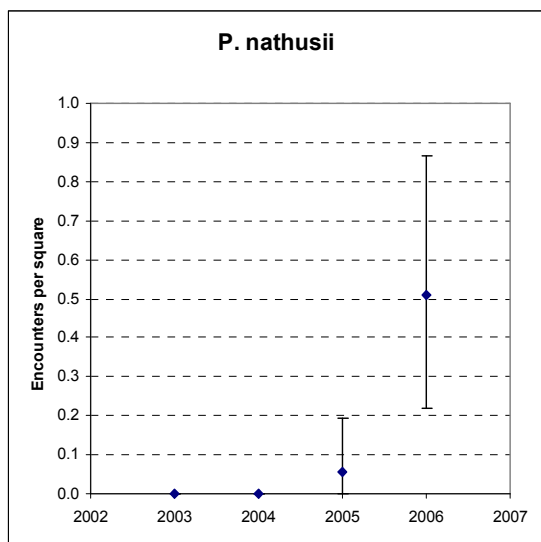


Figure 1: Survey blocks colour coded according to Nathusius pipistrelle records in 2006.

Locations where Nathusius pipistrelles occur are highlighted in **yellow**.

Blue squares indicate an absence of records. Squares are not highlighted if no data is available.

Despite the overall low occurrence of the bat, the following trend graph (derived from a GLM model) certainly seems show that it is on an increasing trend.



It could be hypothesised that climate change and increasing average air temperatures have made Ireland more appealing to the bat, or the spread and increase could be just a natural phenomenon that would have happened anyway. The Nathusius also showed a big increase in Britain in 2006; where four had been recorded by the equivalent car-based scheme in 2005, 39 were recorded in 2006.

Other species of pipistrelle are also on the move and increase across Europe – Kuhl's pipistrelle was fairly recently described as a resident on Jersey and is increasingly found on England's southern coast. Again, climate change or some other factors may be at play here but it should be anticipated along the south coast of Ireland in the not too distant future. One difficulty for bat workers is the similarity of echolocation calls of Kuhl's pipistrelle to those of Nathusius' pipistrelle, further confusing the issue. New bat detector records for Nathusius pipistrelle along the south coast, for example in Wexford, should be followed up with attempts to identify the species in the hand if at all possible.

For more information on the Car Based Bat Monitoring Scheme, which is funded by The National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS), Environment and Heritage Service (EHS), Northern Ireland, and The Heritage Council, see the BC Ireland website. Annual reports can also be downloaded from the website.

BRAND NEW PROJECTS FOR 2007 – Brown Long-eared bats and 'Square Bashing' for Bat Distribution

Bat Conservation Ireland is committed to ensuring Irish bat populations are monitored and surveyed to improve our knowledge and to better advise on policy and conservation issues. We will be starting a new pilot monitoring scheme for Brown long-eared bats in 2007 along with a scheme to survey for bats in all areas of the country where they have not yet been recorded to-date. Nick-named 'Square Bashing' we would like people who have any level of bat detector experience to help us fill in the gaps in known bat distribution in Ireland.

Are there bats in your area that we don't yet know about? The answer is probably yes. Do you know what species they are? Can you let us know? Would you be willing to check some specific locations close to home or even further afield? It doesn't matter if you only have experience identifying Daubenton's bat – we have PLENTY of waterways still to check for this species. Let us know if you are keen to help by clicking on to the monitoring page on our website and we will send you our information and recording pack.

The Brown long-eared bat Monitoring Scheme will involve counting bats in maternity roosts during the months of June and July. Twenty known maternity roosts will be selected from the BC Ireland Database. Teams of volunteers will be trained to monitor a roost in their local county. Two/three counts will be undertaken over the summer and information on the internal structure of the roost space and the external building and immediate environment (foraging habitats and commuting routes) will be collated. This scheme is a pilot one and will determine whether counting individuals in maternity colonies is a viable monitoring tool for this species.

These projects are funded by the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government. BC Ireland also received a grant from

The Heritage Council to increase volunteer participation in monitoring projects. This funding will assist the preparation of volunteer packs, a new Irish Bat Identification Card (which will be distributed to all BC Ireland members) and training courses for the Brown long-eared Monitoring Scheme and the Daubenton's Bat Waterway Survey. Please check our website from training courses which will be held in the months of May-July 2007.



Batline: 046 9242882
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www.batconservationireland.org



ECO-CONGREGATION IRELAND



Given the importance of churches for bats, Bat Conservation Ireland welcomes this eco-initiative on the part of Christian churches in Ireland. One survey of mainly rural Church of Ireland churches in the east of the country showed that 70% of the structures were used by roosting bats. Not only can the buildings themselves be used by bats, but graveyards with mature trees, shrubs and sometimes semi-natural grasslands, are often an important foraging area for bats too.

Eco-Congregation Ireland is an environmental programme for Christian churches in Ireland which is open to all denominations. It has successfully been running in the UK for some time. Currently, five denominations have representatives on the Eco-Congregation Ireland Council: the Methodist Church, the Church of Ireland, the Presbyterian Church, the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) and the Roman Catholic Church. These ecological representatives are liaising with other groups in the UK and Europe.

The programme consists of twelve modules which have been devised in a way that they are applicable to all denominations and they are available to all parishes and dioceses. The content has been developed to support individual churches in their beliefs and offers resources so they can take action to implement 'green' actions within their own premises and with the wider community.

Each module is available for download from the Eco-Congregation Ireland web site. The titles include:

- Module 1: Churches' Environmental Check-up.
- Module 2: Celebrating Creation! – Ideas and Resources for Worship.
- Module 3: Creation and Christianity – Some Green Theological Perspectives.
- Module 4: Acorns to Oaks – Ideas and Activities for Children's Work.
- Module 5: Thread Gently – Go Green – Ideas and Activities for Youth Groups.
- Module 6: Exploring God's Green Word – An Address and Two Sets of Bible Studies for House Groups.
- Module 7: Greening the Cornerstone – Guidelines

- for Caring for Church Premises.
- Module 8: Greening the Purse Strings – Management of Financial, Catering and Purchasing Matters.
- Module 9: Planting and Conserving Eden – Practical Ideas and Advice to Care for Church Grounds and Land.
- Module 10: Green Choices – Information and Suggestions to Green Personal Lifestyles.
- Module 11: Community Matters – Ideas for Churches to Work with, Through and for their Local Communities.
- Module 12: Global Neighbours – Sources and Resources to Help Churches to Think Globally and Act Locally.

The first module consists of an audit that can be done within the church to assess what they are currently doing and how it can be improved to enable congregations to become self-sufficient and monitor their own progress. Other modules are then chosen to prioritise activities over the coming year.

At present much of the content is based on the UK model, but, as more Irish church groups become involved, it is hoped to include more Irish case studies and resource lists. Module 9: Planting and Conserving Eden – Practical Ideas and Advice to Care for Church Grounds and Land, would probably appeal most to BC Ireland members as it includes bats and a positive approach to enhancing church lands and graveyards in a ecologically and environmentally friendly way and promotes the planting of native trees to both encourage wildlife and offset the carbon footprint of the congregation.

Eco-Congregation Ireland is an internet initiative and all resources are free. ecocongregationireland.org

Bat Mitigation Guidelines for Ireland



Irish Wildlife Manuals No. 25



A new publication Bat Mitigation Guidelines is available for download at www.npws.ie Authored by Conor Kelleher and Ferdia Marnell the booklet describes best practice for mitigation measures to protect bat populations during and after building and other developments



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BAT CONSERVATION IRELAND AND LOCAL BAT GROUPS EVENTS AROUND THE ISLAND

All events are listed on the
Events Page on our website

www.batconservationireland.org

Please keep an eye on the
Events Page for updates.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Bat Conservation Ireland AGM 2007 will take place in Muckcross Venture Centre, Killarney on June 10th 2007 at 12.00 noon. All members are very welcome. If you have a keen interest in bats would you consider sitting on the Committee of Bat Conservation Ireland? We need new blood (no pun intended)! Now is an exciting time to be involved in the decision making process as Bat Conservation Ireland takes on more projects and becomes a leading environmental voice in Ireland. Refreshments will be provided.

CAVAN

Thurs 23rd May, 9.30 p.m. Park House Hotel, Virginia, Co. Cavan. Bat Walk

CLARE

Thurs 10th May, 8.30 p.m. Burren College of Art, Ballyvaughan, Bat talk followed by bat walk.

Thurs 17th May, 8.45 p.m. Dromore Woods Car Park, Bat walk.

Thurs 23rd May, 8.00 p.m. Tuamgraney Heritage Centre, East Clare, Bat talk followed by bat walk

CORK

provisional dates listed below, contact Daniel Buckley 086 3691982 for details and to confirm events.

Thurs 10th May 9.00pm Lee Fields Bat walk. Meet at Grotto on Lee Road.

Sun 13th May 11.00am to 5.00pm. Bats in Bridges of the Lee Valley Survey. Meet in Macroom. Contact Daniel Buckley for details

Thurs 24th May, 9.16 p.m. Lee Fields Bat walk. Meet at Grotto on Lee Road.

Sun 27th May 11.00am to 5.00pm. Bats in Bridges of the Lee Valley Survey. Meet in Macroom. Contact Daniel Buckley for details.

Thurs 14th June 10.00pm. Bat Detector Survey in Currabinny Woods, Carrigaline. Meet in Currabinny Woods car park

Sun 17th June 11.00am to 5.00pm. Bats in Bridges of the Lee Valley Survey. Meet in Macroom. Contact Daniel Buckley for details

DUBLIN

Weds 23rd May 9.30 p.m. Bat Walk Meet at Twelve Clock Dart Station, Blanchardstown. Contact Colum Fitzgerald on 087 9982628 for more details.

FERMANAGH

June 30th – July 1st Clinton Centre, Enniskillen. Weekend Bat Detector Workshop led by Jules Agate of the BCT. Contact the BCT or www.bats.org.uk for details.

The 5th Irish Bat Conference

October 12th - 13th Killyhevlin Hotel, Enniskillen.

Talks and presentations on the latest in bat research, at home and abroad. Keynote Speaker will be Prof. John Altringham of Leeds University, author of 'Bats - Biology and Behaviour'. Weather permitting, the conference will be followed by a field visit to caves in the area to look for swarming bats. Further details will be available online on the BC Ireland website. Speakers and talks to be finalised end June 2007. If you would like to present a paper on your research please email niamh.roche@demersal.net.

BCIreland and National Bat Group Summer Events cont'd

GALWAY

Mon 21st May, 9.30 p.m. Meet in Galway Cathedral Car park for Bat walk.
Fri 8th June, 10.00pm. Aughnanure Castle. Bat walk. Meet at the castle car park at sunset
Tues 5th July, 10:20pm. Thoor-Ballylee* (to be confirmed). Bat walk. Meet at the car park at sunset
Sat 11th August, 9:40pm. Mountbellew. Bat walk. Meet at the church car park at sunset

For more information on the last three Galway bat walks contact Elaine O'Riordan phone 091 493863 email elaine.oriordan@nuigalway.ie. After the walks, bat detectors and simple survey forms will be available to borrow for people who would like to do a little bat survey of their own garden or a local park or river. Remember your records will be greatly welcomed as part of the 'Square Bashing' survey.

KERRY

June 8-10th Muckross Venture Centre, Killarney
Bat Detector Workshop and Bat Handling Course. Contact Tina Aughney, tinaaughney@eircom.net, for details ASAP, it's almost booked up already! Please note that if you have any bat specimens in your freezer please bring them along because we are sending a batch for EBLV testing. Specimens preserved in alcohol are not suitable for testing.
June 10th Muckross Adventure Centre, Killarney **Bat Conservation Ireland AGM** 12 noon.

MEATH

Wed 23rd May 9.30 p.m. Boyne Canal Towpath, Slane. Bat walk.
Fri 25th May 8.00 p.m. Muinir na Tir Hall, Moynalty. Bat talk followed by bat walk.

MONAGHAN

Tues 22nd May 2007, 9.30 pm. Rossmore Forest Park Car Park, Monaghan. Bat Walk.

WESTMEATH

Sat 19th May 4.30 pm. Belvedere House and Gardens, Mullingar. Bat Box Building Workshop.
Sat 19th May, 8.30 pm. Belvedere House and Gardens, Mullingar, Bat Talk followed by bat walk.
Sat 25th August, 8.30 pm. Belvedere House and Gardens, Mullingar, Bat Talk followed by bat walk.
Sat 15th September, 7.30 pm. Belvedere House and Gardens, Mullingar, Bat Talk followed by bat walk.

WICKLOW

14th June, 8.00pm Glendalough. lecture by Dr Tina Aughney on the Daubenton's Survey followed by Bat Walk at 9:30 p.m.
12th July, 9.15pm. Glendalough. Bat Walk.
16th August, 8.00pm Glendalough. Lecture "Bats for all the Family" followed by bat walk at 8.30pm. This lecture and walk are suitable for children.

Lectures in Glendalough Education Centre, Walks begin from the Information Office, Glendalough. Please bring a torch and midge repellent!

Events taking place between the dates 19th-26th May 2007 are organized as part of National Biodiversity Week. BCIreland received funding from the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government through the EENGO Network to hold these events. Details of all national events are listed on Notice Nature website:

TRAINING COURSES FOR MONITORING SCHEMES WILL BE POSTED ON THE BCIRELAND WEBSITE. VOLUNTEERS REGISTERED FOR PROGRAMMES WILL BE AUTOMATICALLY NOTICED OF DATES BY EMAIL. IF YOU INTERESTED IN PARTICIPATING, PLEASE REGISTER VIA WEBSITE OR CONTACT COODINATORS OF PROGRAMMES:

Car Based Transect Monitoring Programme:
Daubenton's bat Waterway Survey:
Square Bashing Scheme:
Brown long-eared bat Monitoring Programme:

Dr Niamh Roche niamh.roche@demersal.net.
Dr Tina Aughney tinaaughney@eircom.net
Dr Caroline Shiel membership@batconservationireland.org
Dr Tina Aughney tinaaughney@eircom.net



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WANTED: BAT RECORDS FROM ROAD COLLISIONS

Has a bat ever collided with your vehicle? If so, and you can supply any or all of the following information, then Conor would like to hear from you.

Species:
Adult/Juvenile?:
Sex:
Vehicle make:
Area hit (windscreen, aerial, grill):
Month:
Speed:

Weather:
Road type (Major/Minor):
Bend/straight?:

Please send details to:

Conor Kelleher,
Carrigagulla,
Ballinagree,
Macroom,
Co. Cork.
Ph: 021-7339247
Mob: 087-2980297
Email: conorkelleher@eircom.net

UK BAT TRIALS – BCIreland's Vice-Chairman on the UK Defra's Rabies Experiment

by Conor Kelleher

Bat Conservation Ireland learned of a planned project in the UK in September 2006 to capture at least 50 healthy specimens of Daubenton's bat *Myotis daubentonii* to send them to a laboratory in Germany so that they could be artificially infected with a rabies virus to study its effects. European Bat Lyssavirus (EBLV) is a strain of rabies virus that is found in some European bats and, in particular, Daubenton's. Since 1996, four cases of this virus have been confirmed in this species in Britain. There have been no cases in Ireland.

Following the tragic death of David McRae, a Scottish bat conservationist, from rabies caused by EBLV-type 2 (found in Daubenton's bat) in 2002, the British Daubenton's bat population was tested for the virus by obtaining blood and saliva samples from bats caught in the wild. This survey included over 30 samples from the Irish Republic and results have shown about 3% of this species in England to be seropositive. This indicates that these bats have been exposed to the virus. The samples from Ireland were not tested due to a laboratory error. BCIreland approved of these tests as no animals were harmed during the taking of samples and all were safely released afterwards.

The new project, proposed by the *Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs* (Defra) in the UK, however, goes far beyond these initial tests. BCIreland feels that the taking of healthy animals from the wild, subjecting them to transport across Europe and then infecting them with Rabies before killing them is immoral and unethical. Furthermore, the results of such testing will be flawed from the outset as the trials will be accomplished under laboratory conditions and will not reflect the true nature of the virus in the wild.

Defra's reasoning behind its proposal stemmed from the current poor knowledge of the virus and how bats transmit it and the relationship between the virus and its

bat host. It is possible that the EBLV-type 2 is less virulent than classical strains of rabies virus (e.g. dog rabies). Therefore, Defra wanted to study the incubation period of the virus. Defra is also concerned that a healthy Daubenton's bat may be infected with EBLV-type 2 and be capable of transmitting the disease without showing signs of rabies itself.

Defra justified the project by saying that it needed to achieve firm scientific evidence to support the current policy on bat rabies. Also that it needs to give clear unequivocal advice to bat handlers and the general public on any risks to which they may be exposed when coming into direct contact with bats. They also claim that such research will help to provide a better understanding of the results of rabies surveillance work on bats in the UK undertaken previously.

Defra's reasons for undertaking this project are unjustifiable in that few people make contact with Daubenton's bat as they roost in bridges and trees not modern housing. Furthermore, bat handlers and carers use gloves when caring for these animals and are required to be vaccinated against rabies before handling bats in the first place. Unfortunately, the Scottish bat worker who contracted the disease handled bats frequently over many decades and refused to be vaccinated. The test results on a single species of bat such as Daubenton's cannot be extrapolated in a meaningful way to any other species as the virus may vary in habits between species. So, the argument that the project will give scientific evidence for risk assessment for the general public when coming into contact with bats in general, is nonsense.

The removal of 50+ (legally protected) bats from the wild will have unknown consequences amongst local populations. Also, a wild bat in captivity behaves in a stressed manner and it therefore cannot act as a scientific test subject in such a state. Previous research has shown that bats under stress have lower immune system functioning and this fact alone will skew the results. Furthermore, the taking of 50 bats might be the start of a much larger project. This proposal, therefore, sets a precedent, legitimised by its own authority, which may

lead to other pointless projects in the future. The project is to cost 300,000 Pounds Sterling.

A licence for the project has been granted by *English Nature*, the Statutory Nature

Conservation Organisation in England. The study is to be undertaken in Germany. BC Ireland wrote to *English Nature* asking it to revoke the licence for this project and communicated its objections to Defra. The *Bat Groups of Britain* have also objected as have a number of animal welfare organisations. Please send your polite concerns to:

Defra at: helpline@defra.gsi.gov.uk and enquiries@vla.defra.gsi.gov.uk
English Nature at: Jo.Oldaker@English-Nature.Org.UK

Finally, let's put all this in perspective: what exactly are the risks involved in contracting rabies from a bat? Well, this is actually addressed on Defra's own web site:

"EBLV types 1 and 2 belong to a small group of viruses that are related to classical rabies virus. EBLV-1 has been detected in serotine bats in mainland Europe but not in the UK. EBLV-2 appears to be relatively rare but live virus has been detected in four Daubenton's bats in the UK since 1996. Classical rabies virus is not found in the UK apart from occasional instances in people returning from overseas."

Bat Conservation Ireland Membership Renewal

It is that time of the year again when Bat Conservation Ireland is seeking your continued support towards promoting conservation and monitoring of bats and their habitats in Ireland.

Please renew your membership TODAY!

Name: _____

Address: _____

Email: _____ Telephone no.: _____

Membership: Individual (€10) Family (€15)

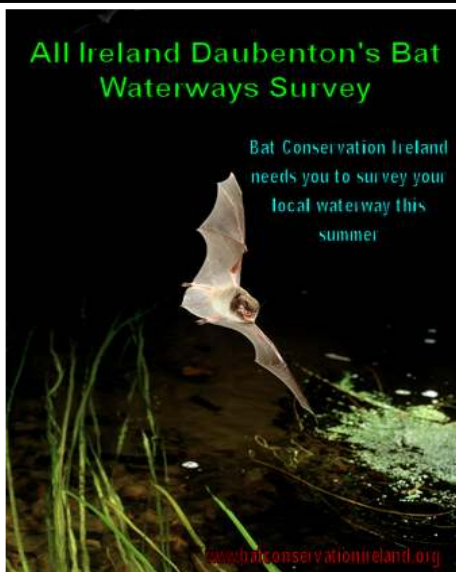
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Bat corpses to be sent for passive EBLV testing will be collected from the Bat Detector Workshop in Killarney in JunE. Fresh frozen specimens are ideal for testing, dried bats or bats preserved in alcohol are not usable.

Contact the membership secretary, membership@batconservationireland.org if you would like more details.

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Sex:
Vehicle make:
Area hit (windscreen, aerial, grill):
Month:
Speed:

Weather:
Road type (Major/Minor):
Bend/straight?:

Please send details to:

Conor Kelleher,
Carrigagulla,
Ballinagree,
Macroom,
Co. Cork.
Ph: 021-7339247
Mob: 087-2980297
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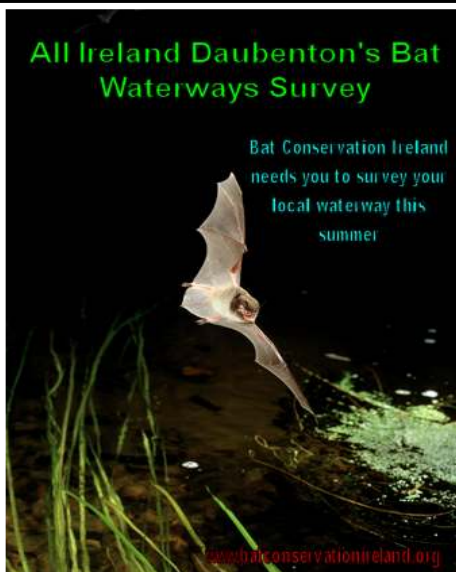
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DAUBENTON'S SURVEY A GREAT SUCCESS IN 2006!

by Tina Aughney

The All-Ireland Daubenton's Bat Waterway Survey was piloted throughout the island in August 2006. A total of 134 waterway sites were surveyed by 131 volunteer teams in 27 counties of Ireland. (Republic of Ireland: 22 counties surveyed, Northern

Ireland; 5 counties surveyed). The largest number of waterway sites surveyed were located in County Cork (15 waterway sites) followed by County Galway (11 waterway sites), County Dublin (10 waterway sites) and County Kildare (10 waterway sites).

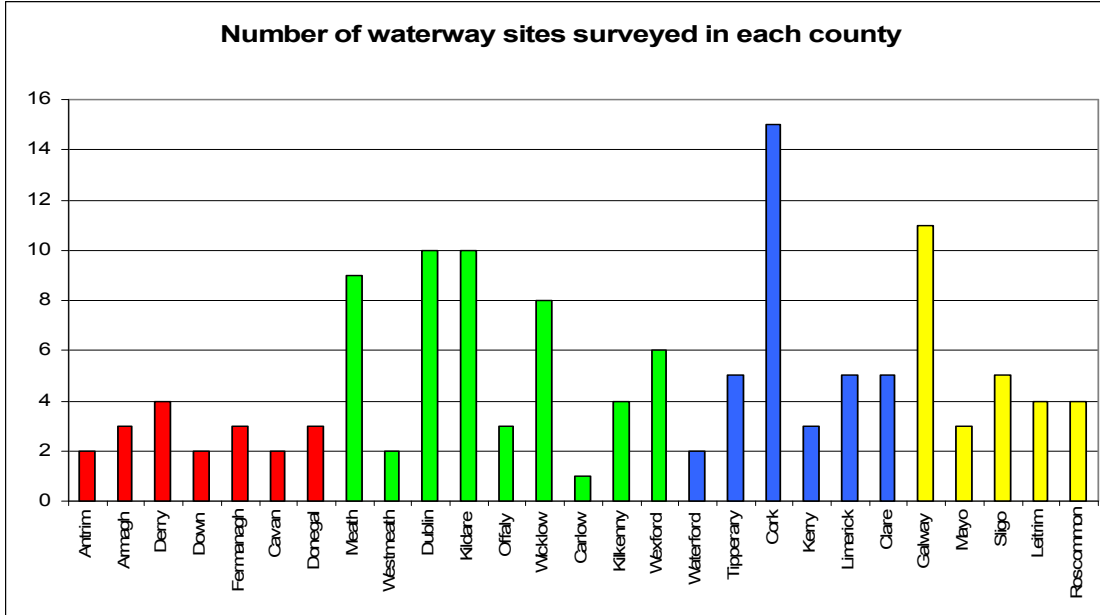


Figure 1: Number of waterway sites surveyed (n=134) in each county surveyed (n=27) in August 2006.

Five counties were not surveyed in 2006: Counties Monaghan, Louth, Longford, Laois and Tyrone.

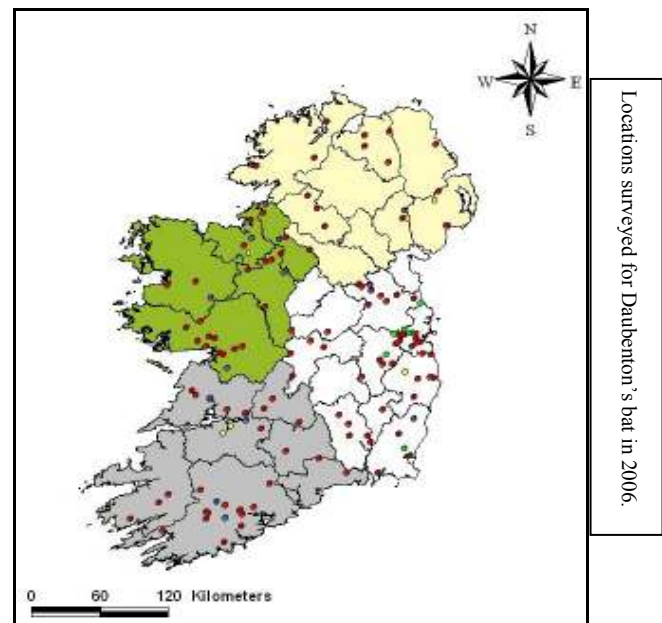
KEY TO FIGURE

- Ulster
- Leinster
- Munster
- Connaught

Volunteers sampled a waterway site that is already sampled by the EHS or EPA for pollution levels. Ten points, 100m apart, were surveyed by volunteers on two evenings in August 2006 (where possible). At each of the 10 points volunteers recorded Daubenton's bat activity for 4 minutes. A total of 256 completed surveys from the 134 waterway sites were returned to BC Ireland. Overall, a greater number of completed surveys were undertaken in Leinster (53 waterway sites, 102 completed surveys).

Daubenton's bat 'bat passes' were recorded on 122 waterway sites (91%) while 'Unsure' Daubenton's bat 'bat passes' were recorded on 114 waterway sites (85%). Connaught had the highest mean number of Daubenton's bat 'passes' per survey compared to the three other provinces. The success of this pilot was due to the large number of volunteers who carefully mapped and surveyed sites. BC Ireland will continue this scheme in 2007 and 2008. Our aims for 2007 are to increase the number of waterway sites surveyed and to ensure surveys are carried out in the five counties that were not surveyed in 2006. BC Ireland will be organizing another series of training courses throughout the island in June and July 2007.

Full details of the results are available in Aughney *et al.*, (2007), which will soon be available on our website.



The Natterer, Autumn/Winter Edition 2007 – if you are interested in submitting an article or as a member, you wish to read material on particular topics, please send an email with details to niamh.roche@demersal.net. Articles to be submitted by August 15th 2007.

