



The Natterer

Spring/Summer 2009

Car-based transect monitoring scheme Niamh Roche

Car-based bat monitoring had a very successful season in 2008. Surveys were very diligently carried out in 27, 30km squares by 60 volunteers around the country. Poor weather and flooding did cause some surveys to be abandoned, however. Among the interesting findings for 2008 were overall increases in soprano pipistrelle and Leisler's bat encounter rates but a slight dip in common pipistrelles. *Nathusius'* pipistrelles were very rarely recorded last year, none even from Northern Ireland squares, although J06, a stronghold for the bat in previous years, was not surveyed in 2008.

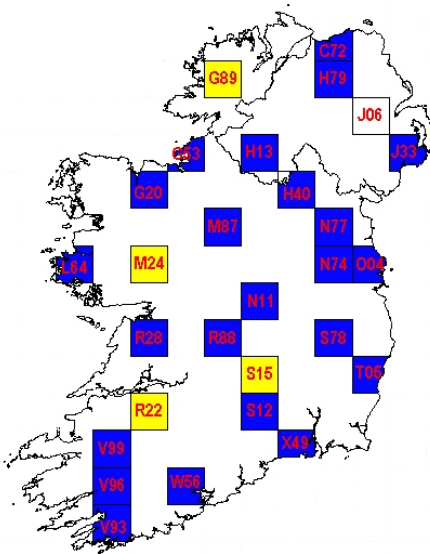


Figure 1: Map of 30km survey squares for Car-Based Bat Monitoring Scheme in 2008. Blue squares were surveyed twice in 2008, yellow squares were surveyed once. Clear squares were not surveyed in 2008.

A look at initial trends from this survey seem to show increases in populations of all three of the target bat species (common and soprano pipistrelles and Leisler's, see Figure 2), although we are still at a relatively early stage in the survey so trends may change. Last year we did think that

Nathusius' pipistrelle was on a major increasing trend but with a continuing drop in 2008 from high levels in 2006 this now seems less likely.

The 'other vertebrate' data (mainly mammals) still shows domination of night-time roadsides by cats on the prowl. Cats account for over 50% of all 'other vertebrate' sightings.

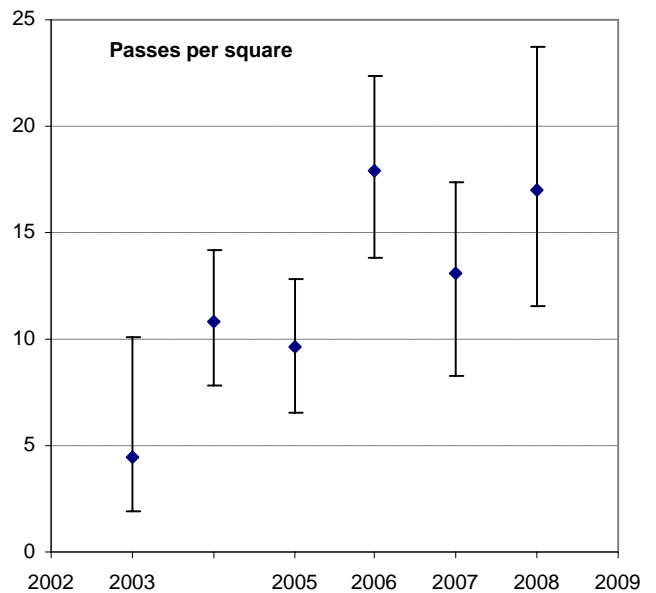


Figure 2: Yearly trend data for Leisler's bat. This species appears to be on the increase. Data derived from Car-Based Bat Monitoring Scheme, 2003-2008.

Provided we are successful in tendering for the next three years of the car-based bat monitoring survey we intend to make a slight methodology change for 2009 (about which many surveyors will breathe a sigh of relief), we plan to drop the last five transects from the survey making the average survey time closer to 3 hours. Fingers crossed we'll be successful in the tendering process and can proceed, full steam ahead in 2009.

99 Nights of “Bat Hunting” Isobel Abbott

The longer days and warmer evenings of summer 2008 brought with them the first of the field-work for a bat research project I started in 2007. The project is a NRA-funded PhD called “Assessing the effectiveness of mitigation measures employed on Irish national road schemes for the conservation of bats”, based in University College Cork. Autumn 2007 I wrote an article in the *Natterer* outlining the threats of roads to bats, and the rationale for assessing mitigation measures. Thanks to those who gave me feedback from that. This article is an update on how the first field-work season went, with some of the preliminary findings.



Major roads threaten bats in three ways; loss and degradation of habitat, mortality through traffic collision and the disruption of commuting routes. Many bats avoid flying over open ground, instead flying close to linear landscape features, such as hedgerows, treelines, and woodland edge. These features provide shelter from wind and avian predators, and perhaps more importantly, an acoustic and visual guide for navigating between their traditional roosting, feeding and mating areas. So what happens to bats when a major road scheme severs such features, rendering the familiar habitat suddenly unfamiliar? How far can bat mitigation measures go toward reducing the barrier effect and the risk of collision mortality?

Relatively little is known about the interaction of bats with wide roads to date, and some of the most useful knowledge is anecdotal or not widely available.



Bat detector in position at a severed tree-line along a dual-carriageway

The majority of the field-work effort over the summer was spent investigating potential bat crossings at sites where a major road has severed linear landscape features. Using acoustic bat detectors, we set out to quantify bat activity at each of five crossing type categories - minor road underpasses and overpasses, river bridges, stream culverts and severed treelines. These sites were further classified in terms of dimensions and connectivity with the surrounding vegetation and landscape. Any bat activity at road crossing points was put into context with activity levels along connected linear features in the surrounding habitat, further away from the road. This monitoring of bat movements around roads involved lots of clambering up and sliding down embankments, teetering over the edge of streams, huddling under bridges, and listening out for the creatures of the night.

The nocturnal nature of bats requires a bit of adjustment to the daily activity patterns of any bat worker on the hunt for data. Behaviour becomes increasingly dictated by the setting and rising of the sun, and the vagrancies of the weather. Not being as well-adapted to the night-life as the bats themselves, it was important to put in some of the groundwork during daylight. The whereabouts of local bulls and the chinks in the armour of the roadside mammal-proof fencing were sussed out.

Landowners and people living nearby were contacted to give them advance notice of activities that may have otherwise seemed highly suspect. One evening after dusk, a woman pulled over her car looking for the owner of a strange contraption with blinking red lights that she had picked up while out walking. She was intrigued to hear how it could be used to identify bats, and luckily hadn't called in the bomb squad. This is just what happened last May in England, when the army was called in to blow up a suspicious package on the A23 in Sussex, which turned out to be a bat detector! For more on this see:

(http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/england/sussex/6618737.stm)

Fortunately, on any given night I had the help of either Audra Peterson or Vincent Brennan, who worked part-time on the project. Having two observers was vital, for instance, when investigating which bat species and how many dared to run the traffic gauntlet from one severed treeline to another on each side of a wide road. Recording devices on opposite sides of the dual-carriageway were synchronised before starting so that bat passes were time-stamped for later identification and analyses. Observers positioned on either side, flashed a torch briefly if a bat was seen or heard via detectors, to confirm whether it crossed the road. And bats, to my surprise, were frequently observed to traverse the road at such points. Early in the evening, they could be seen in flight quite clearly. In one ten minute period, eight pipistrelles flew from one side to another. In a separate instance, a bat was observed to barely clear the top of an oncoming lorry in an upward evasive manoeuvre.

All bat species present in Ireland have been recorded as traffic casualties, and if the level of mortality is high enough, this may eventually lead to local population decline and extinction. For instance, recent research in Poland has documented high mortality of Daubenton's and Natterer's bats along stretches of motorway, particularly where a treeline has been severed by the road.

A less risky strategy for a bat to access the habitat on the opposite side of a road may be to fly beneath it via tunnels. We investigated bat use of

underpasses designed to accommodate a feature of the landscape, such as a country road or stream, which existed before the motorway. To date, tunnels specifically designed as bat mitigation measures have not yet been installed on completed Irish national road schemes.



Light at the end of a tunnel for bats?

Bat detectors and an observer were stationed within the underpass to confirm whether bats flew all the way through. As a control, another bat detector was simultaneously in position above the underpass, facing across the motorway, to detect bats which potentially took this route. Many species, including the lesser horseshoe bat, made use of the underpasses in our study, none of which had artificial lighting. It can feel like a long time waiting in the dark for a sign of activity. Just when the concentration levels were ebbing, the bat detectors chattered into life, and you felt glad that you weren't on a 'kit-kat' break after all!

In total, ninety-nine nights of bat surveys were carried out, not all of which worked out exactly as planned. Some sites weren't easily accessible, some pieces of equipment arrived faulty and had to be returned and re-ordered. The rain not only dampened the spirits of the bats, and sometimes the researchers, it also threatened to damage equipment that was not readily replaceable. Given the record amount of rainfall over the summer months, we were delighted to have managed to survey all of the study sites that we had hoped to do by the end of the season. And

over the season we encountered lots of interesting nocturnal sights and sounds, not only bat-related, but other species as well - dippers, long-eared owls, foxes, otters and people! We also got to see some amazing places, for instance a river that disappeared into a swallow hole in Galway, not to mention the amazing sunsets. A quantitative presentation of the results will be available after all the recordings are analysed. There are 250GB of them, perfect work for the winter hibernation period. Fortunately the workers and the equipment made it through to the end of the first field-work season uninjured and undaunted, and are already geared up for more bat-hunting in 2009.

Phylogeography & population genetics of the endangered lesser horseshoe bat (*Rhinolophus hipposideros*) Serena Dool

There are over 70 species of horseshoe bat, only one of which occurs in Ireland, where it is confined largely to the western counties. The lesser horseshoe has a large distribution ranging from southern Europe and southern Russia as far as the Caspian Sea. It also occurs in a small area of Northern Africa, Sinai and in several countries north of India. *R. hipposideros* is classed as internationally important in the Irish Red Data book. It is in Annex II & IV of the Habitats Directive and Appendix II of the Bern Convention, as a species requiring strict protection.

Females come together to form maternity roosts each summer and have just one pup every two years once they have reached sexual maturity. All female horseshoe bats have a set of false nipples or teats which aid the young bat when clinging to its mother.

The current three-year study will firstly examine the evolutionary history of this species across its current range and secondly, investigate the finer scale population structure within Ireland using genetics and evolutionary methods. The study within Ireland will address several questions: (a) what is the origin and date of arrival of the Irish population of lesser horseshoe bats; (b) is the Irish population currently expanding (and if so in

which localities); (c) has the Irish population decreased in the past?

We will identify if and where there are colonies that may be genetically isolated from the colonies in neighbouring counties or if the bats are dispersing far enough to maintain contact between all localities. In addition, the effective population size, genetic diversity and echolocation differences within Ireland (and between Irish lesser horseshoes and other populations) will be examined.

Finding roosts within the Ireland that is the most genetically diverse and therefore of high conservation importance is essential to the ongoing monitoring and conservation initiatives led by the National Parks and Wildlife Service and The Vincent Wildlife Trust.



Male lesser horseshoe bat

Greatest appreciation goes to all NPWS staff, Dr. Kate McAney (VWT) and Conor Kelleher of Bat Conservation Ireland for field and sampling assistance and advice throughout the project.

This project is funded by an Irish Research Council Science Engineering and Technology (IRCSET) PhD scholarship under the supervision of Dr Emma Teeling (University College Dublin, Ireland) and in collaboration with Dr. Stephen Rossiter (Queen Mary, London).

Daubenton's Waterway Monitoring in 2008 Tina Aughney

In 2008, 180 waterway sites were surveyed in all 32 counties under the All Ireland Daubenton's Bat waterway Monitoring Scheme, with Daubenton's bat 'bat passes' being recorded on 156 waterway sites (87%), despite the bad weather experienced during the two sample periods during August. However, looking at results since 2006 using REML analysis, there is clear evidence for a decline in Daubenton's bat numbers over the course of the survey. However, further monitoring is required before accurate trends can be determined. The following is just a summary of some of the main findings for 2008; more detail will be available shortly on the website.

In all, 170 volunteer teams participated in the 2008 survey, with 30 teams located in Northern Ireland and 140 in the Republic. There were a total of 313 surveys completed and some teams visiting more than one site. The county with the most number of sites surveyed was Cork (n=12) followed closely by Wicklow and Dublin in joint second place with 11 sites each. Figure 1 shows the results for all the counties. However, overall, the highest number of both sites (n=76) and completed surveys (n=135) were undertaken in Leinster. The types of waterways included 112 rivers, nine canals and one channel (North Slobs), but 27 waterways had more than one site along their length surveyed, e.g. the Grand Canal had nine different sites.

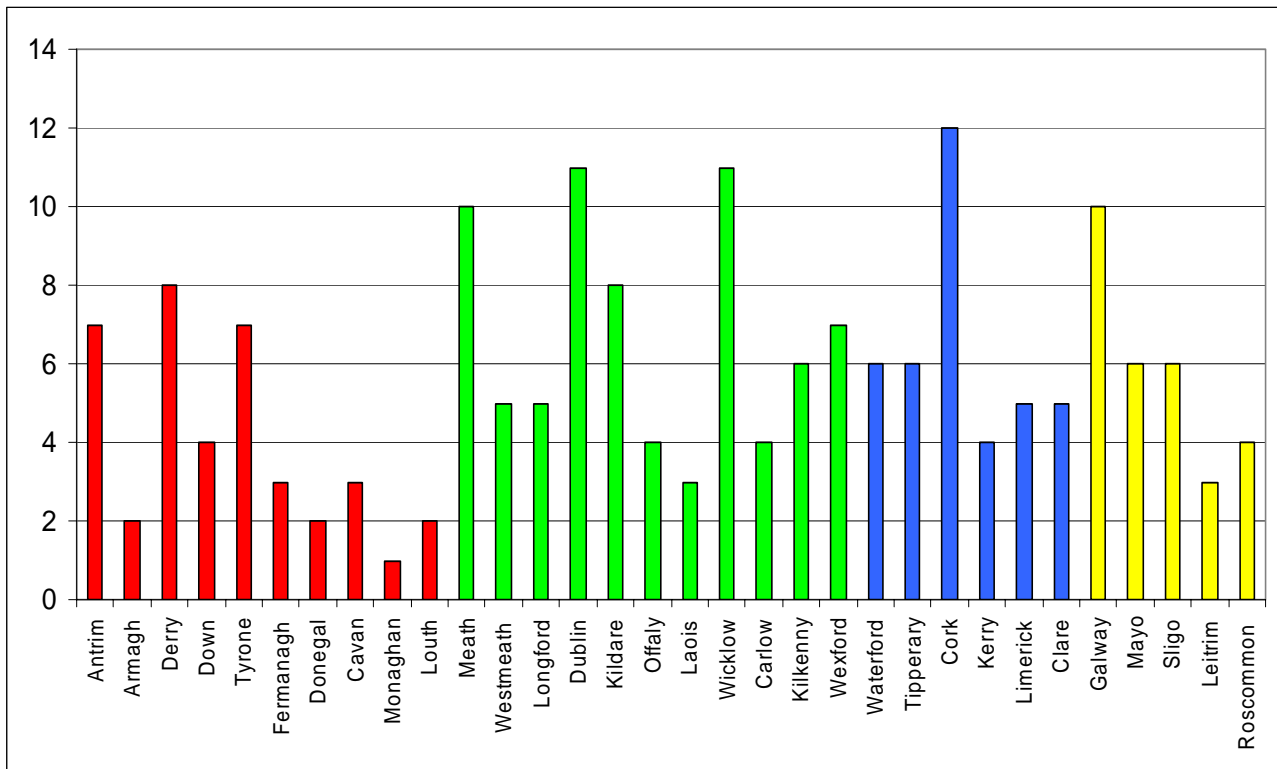


Figure 1. Number of waterway sites surveyed (n=180) in each county surveyed (n=32) in August 2008.

■ Ulster (n=37),
 ■ Leinster (n=76),
 ■ Munster (n=37),
 ■ Connaught (n=30)

The All-Ireland Daubenton's Bat Waterway Survey, like the Car Transect Scheme, will be going to tender of another three years of funding. Fingers crossed we'll be successful in the tendering process and can proceed with another successful three years of surveying.

Brown long-eared roost monitoring in 2008 Tina Aughney

During 2008, 70 surveys of 51 structures were completed by BC Ireland volunteers under the Brown long-eared Roost Monitoring project, equating to approximately 140 hours of surveying. In total, 17 brown long-eared roosts were monitored (i.e. at least two surveys completed in two different time periods) and four additional structures monitored only once due to poor weather conditions. A further 30 structures were investigated to determine the possibility of including such roosts in the monitoring scheme in 2009. Twelve of these roosts were deemed suitable for further investigation.

The survey involves emergence surveys of roosts (dusk surveys to count bats as they leave the roost). Surveying is undertaken during three periods (one survey per period i.e. total of three surveys):

Period A: beginning of May to Mid-June

Period B: Mid-June to end of July

Period C: beginning of August to mid-September

We are seeking to organise a team (minimum of 2-4 people per roost) of roost counters for 33 roosts in the following counties: Galway, Clare, Limerick, Kerry, Cork, Waterford, Wexford, Offaly, Dublin, Wicklow, Roscommon and Laois. If you would like to get involved, please email tinaaughney@eircom.net.

BCI undertakes studies on behalf of The Heritage Council Kate Mc Aney

During 2008 BCI conducted two important studies with funding from The Heritage Council, both of which are now available to download from our website. The results of one of these, '*An investigation of the impact of development projects on bat populations*', which involved assessing the presence of bats at twelve sites after a variety of changes and mitigation measures had been undertaken, are a source of concern. The actions carried out involved habitat loss across a broad spectrum (including woodland, hedgerows, treelines, lakeshore, amenity grassland, wet grassland, scrub and conifer plantation), changes to buildings (involving complete demolition, renovation or plumbing works), and the provision of infrastructure such as new roads and lighting. While some allowance must be made for the facts that several years had elapsed from when the initial bat surveys took place and that the summer of 2008 was notoriously bad for bats, it is worrying that after the development work at nine of the twelve sites, bats had not returned to their roosting sites and/or were not heard in the vicinity. In only one case, coincidentally where the recommended mitigation measures were properly followed, did the roosting sites for colonies of soprano pipistrelles and brown long-eared bats persist. Eight of the projects involved erecting bat boxes as a mitigation measure and results from BCI's study reveal that bats preferred 'woodcrete' boxes over timber boxes, with 91 individuals of four species (soprano & common pipistrelle (n = 68 & 17), Leisler's (5) and Daubenton's (1)) found in these boxes.

In the other study, '*A bat survey of bridges identified by the All Ireland Daubenton's bat waterway survey as potential bat roosts*', 52% of bridges surveyed had either the potential to be or were already bat roosting sites. The majority of suitable bridges were masonry, as were all the bridges (12%) that had bats or bat droppings. Of the 16 modern bridges surveyed, only one had the potential to be a bat roosting site. Many of the bridges had heavy ivy growth, which can provide bats with roosting sites, while many also provided nesting sites for birds. This report is being sent to all local authorities, with a recommendation that all bridges should be checked for bats prior to maintenance work, either visually or using a bat detector, so that appropriate measures can be put in place to safeguard actual or potential bat roosting sites.

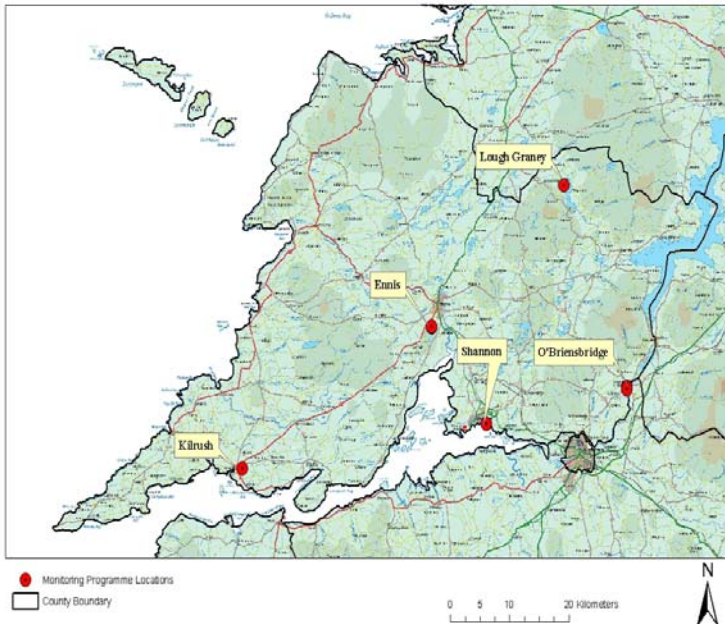
Bat Box Scheme in County Clare

Sinead Biggane

The Clare bat group was set up in 2006 by local nature conservation workers in response to an increasing level of interest in bats from the public. The aim of the group is to conserve and enhance the bat populations of County Clare through education, surveying and direct conservation work.

In 2008 we were awarded a Heritage Council grant to implement a Bat Box scheme throughout the county. Six bat boxes were erected at five separate sites achieving a broad geographical spread throughout County Clare. All five sites are illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1 Locations of Bat Boxes Co. Clare



The sites are Vandeleur Gardens in Kilrush, Ballybeg Wood in Ennis, Riverside Walk in O'Briensbridge, Clonmoney South in Shannon and Knocknageeha Wood along the shoreline of Lough Graney. All are in areas of broadleaved woodland with good bat foraging potential and two of the sites are located close to aquatic habitats. All boxes were of the 'Schwegler' design with fifteen of the 1FF model and fifteen of the 2FN model (Figures 2 and 3).

All the bat boxes were initially monitored in November 2008. Unfortunately three of the boxes in Kilrush were vandalised, one had to be

removed because the door was destroyed and another two had their doors cracked but were left in place. To protect them from further destruction, the boxes were moved to a quieter area. A box in Ballybeg woods in Ennis was also destroyed possibly due to being blown off the tree. Of the twenty eight boxes currently mounted on trees 10 had bats present with a total of 19 bats recorded.

Three species have been recorded, Leisler's, Pipistrelles and Brown long-eared. The bat boxes in Knocknageeha have the greatest number of bats with thirteen individuals counted.

All bat boxes will be continually monitored over the coming years. Additional boxes were bought thanks to extra funding and these will be used to replace broken or damaged boxes over the coming years. All species data will feed into the Clare Biological Records Centre and the Bat Conservation Ireland Database which both feed into the National Biodiversity Data Centre. This project will help implement the Clare biodiversity and Heritage Plans and has the support of the Clare Heritage Officer.



Figure 2. 1FF bat box

Figure 3. 2FN bat box

The Clare Bat Group would like to acknowledge the Heritage Council for providing funding for this project and their continued advice and support throughout the year. We are also indebted to Coillte, Waterways Ireland and Clare County Council for their co-operation in the placement of the bat boxes. The group would also like to thank the community groups, public and volunteers who helped out and attended walks and talks in such great numbers.

Bat lifts off with space shuttle! Conor Kelleher

Prior to and during the launch of the space shuttle *Discovery* from Cape Canaveral, Florida, in March, a small bat was noticed clinging to the external booster rocket to which the shuttle is initially attached. The bat was identified as a free-tailed and seemed to have been injured as it had difficulty moving its right wing but it was alive and moving as the countdown for launch commenced.

The little bat hung on as the count reached zero and the engines fired up. This booster rocket is filled with super-cold liquid hydrogen and liquid oxygen but the outer surface is quite warm which may have appealed to the bat which was perched about a third of the way up its length. Observers at NASA using infra red cameras noted that the bat was alive and that it hung on at least until the shuttle cleared the launch pad tower but it was then lost to sight. It is doubtful that it survived especially if it were injured.

NASA's inspection team had to assess if the bat represented a danger to the heat shield of the shuttle if it collided with it during the launch but, concluding that it didn't, they proceeded with the countdown.

The Kennedy Space Centre is situated within the protected Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge and is therefore home to much wildlife including alligators, wild hogs, armadillos and numerous bird and bat species and the launch pads are equipped with sirens and other deterrents to keep wildlife at bay during use. However, on rare occasions accidents do happen and this is the third bat that's been noted clinging to a booster rocket; in 1998, a bat landed on the external tank for the shuttle Columbia but departed before lift-off and, in 1996, a roosting bat made a quick escape from the space shuttle Endeavour as it was fired up.

By coincidence, an astronaut on board the 1996 flight, Koichi Wakata of Japan, was also on the *Discovery* mission in March.

The Galway Bat Group made a positive start to the year with a very successful workshop for its members on March 14th. Kate McAney talked about identification of bats in the hand and Tina Aughney challenged our scientific and tonal knowledge learning with her presentation on bat calls. A very useful session was given by Catriona Carlin on the life of a batworker and in particular how to deal with calls from the public concerning bats in houses. Catriona is now booked to expand this module to an entire day's workshop to be given just before the summer season.

Conor Kelleher gave a talk on April 8th entitled 'Bats - Myth & Reality' which was very well attended. Conor was entertaining and informative as always.

Apart from these activities, the Galway Bat Group is planning a full summer of events for the public and will be organising the first joint outing with the Clare Bat Group in late July at Attyslany Woods.

The group has also gone virtual with a Googlegroup to help members keep in touch.

Now, all we need is a good summer and some bats.....

Raymond Stephens



Heterodyne Bat Detector Training Course - An introductory course in the use of basic bat detectors (Heterodyne) to observe bats and identify to species level

Fri 5th – Sun 7th June 2009
Cluan Place North Residential Centre,
Ulster Folk and Transport Museum, Co. Down
See Events page below for details

Summer Events 2009

Please check www.batconservationireland.org for a full listing of Events planned for the summer. This is updated on a regular basis, and events not advertised in *The Natterer* will be advertised on the website.

- **Saturday 9th May**

Belvedere House and Gardens, Mullingar, County Westmeath. Tel.044 9349060. Bat talk, followed by a walk (weather permitting).

- **May 18th - 25th, 2009 Cork City Library, Grand Parade, Cork**

Cork County Bat Group has developed a number of informative and very eye-catching bat posters with the general public in mind. These are being publicly displayed in the library as part of Biodiversity Week.

- **Sunday 17th May : Biodiversity Week.**

Bat Talk & Walk the Irish Natural Forestry Foundation Centre, Manch Estate, Enniskeane/Ballineen, Co. Cork @ 8.30 p.m.

- **Monday 18th May : Biodiversity Week.**

Bat Walk in Dromore Woods, County Clare @ 9.30 p.m.

- **Tuesday 19th May : Biodiversity Week.**

Bat Walk in Herbert Park (Entrance across from Playground), Ballsbridge, Dublin City @ 9.00 p.m. Please contact Mairead Stack, Biodiversity Officer of Dublin City Council for further details.

- **Wednesday 20th May : Biodiversity Week.**

Bat Talk and Walk in the Burren College of Art, Ballyvuaghan, County Clare @ 8.30 p.m.

Bat Walk in Knocksink Wood Nature Reserve, details 01 2866609

Bat Talk & Walk for the North Cork Organic Group at the Nano Nagle Centre for Heritage, Spirituality and Ecology, Ballygriffin, Mallow, Cork @ 8.30 p.m.

- **Friday 22nd May : Biodiversity Week.**

Bat Talk and Walk in Macra Mac Finns GAA Club House, Virginia, County Cavan @ 8.30 p.m.

Bat Walk in Cork City, meet at The Grotto opposite Mount Desert on the Lee Road @ 9.30 p.m.

- **Saturday 23rd May : Biodiversity Week & IWT WildWatch Walk Day**

Bat Talk and Walk in Knockreer House Education Centre, Kilarney, County Kerry @ 8.30 p.m.

- **Sunday 24th May : Biodiversity Week & IWT Anniversary Celebrations**

Bat Walk at Castle Lake Car Park, Bailieborough, County Cavan @ 9.30 p.m.

- **Tuesday 26th May: Biodiversity Week**

Bat Talk & Walk in Fitzsimmons Wood, South Dublin @ 8.30 p.m. Please contact Mary Toomey, Biodiversity Officer for Dun Laoghaire Rathdown for further details.

- **Northern Ireland Bat Group Annual Bat Detector Workshop.**

Friday 5th June to Sunday 7th June Fri 5th – Sun 7th June @ Cluan Place North Residential Centre, Ulster Folk and Transport Museum, Cultra, Holywood, Co. Down BT18 OEU. For details and to book: Email: a.hopkirk@ntlworld.com Tel: 02890 292138 (UK) or 04890 292138 (RoI). May 15th bookings closing date.

- **Bat Conservation Ireland Annual Bat Detector Workshop.**

Friday 12th June to Sunday 14th June, Ballinafad Enterprise Centre, Ballinafad, County Sligo. Places will be limited to the first 30 paid registration forms. Please email tinaaughney@eircom.net for further details.

- **Wednesday 17th June: Clare Bat Group**

Bat Walk at Two-mile gate, Killaloe @ 10.00 p.m.

- **Thursday 18th June**

Bat Walk at Wicklow National Park @ 9.30 p.m. Meet at Information Office, Upper Lake, Glendalough

- **Wednesday 15th July: Clare Bat Group**

Bat Walk at O'Briensbridge @ 10.00 p.m.

- **Nathusius' and Improvers Bat Detector Workshop.**

Friday 7th August to Sunday 9th August, The Clinton Centre and Bridges Hostel, Enniskillen, County Fermanagh. Places will be limited to the first 30 paid registration forms. Please email a.hopkirk@ntlworld.com for further details.

- **Thursday 13th August: Wicklow National Park**

Bat Talk & Walk in Education Centre at 7.45 p.m.

- **Wednesday 27th August: Clare Bat Group & Heritage Week**

Bat Walk in Ennis @ 8.30 p.m.

- **Saturday 12th September**

Belvedere House and Gardens, Mullingar, County Westmeath. Tel.044 9349060. Bat talk, followed by a walk (weather permitting) @ 8.00 p.m.

- **Saturday 31st October (Halloween)**

Belvedere House and Gardens, Mullingar, County Westmeath. Tel.044 9349060. Bat talk, followed by a walk (weather permitting) @ 8.30 p.m.

Bat Conservation Ireland's Annual Bat Detector Workshop is set for the 12th-14th June 2009. It will be held in the Ballinafad Enterprise Centre, Ballinafad, County Sligo. This centre is located south of the county only 5km from Boyle and Lough Key Forest Park where we hope to concentrate surveying. The course is limited to the first 30 paid registered forms received.

Course Fee: €220 pp (€200 for BC Ireland members)

This fee will cover full accommodation and catering (Friday: dinner and packed lunch, Saturday: breakfast, dinner, packed lunch & Sunday: breakfast) and tutoring fees.

Course content: While all Irish species will be covered, this course is designed to introduce people principally to the detection of the four common bat species: soprano and common pipistrelle, Leisler's bat and Daubenton's bat. The course will involve lectures on bat ecology, physics of sound and echolocation, bat detection, use of bat detectors, Law and bats and a practical session involving bat identification in the hand (using dead specimens). These lectures will be supported by two nights and one dawn survey of local habitats to the South Sligo and North Roscommon area (approximately 10km square radius around the centre).

If you are interested in attending the course, please email tinaaughney@eircom.net for an application form.

Bat Conservation Ireland Strategic Review

YOUR OPINION IS NEEDED

The Strategic Review Sub-committee of BC Ireland will soon be asking all members to contribute to a strategic review of Bat Conservation Ireland to help us plan for the future. Everyone who currently receives *The Natterer* by email will be able to contribute online, and those who receive their copy of the newsletter by post will be contacted by this means. BCI has been in existence since 2004, so the time is right for a review, given the current economic climate and the fact that all charities need to be prepared for the changes that will take place once the Charities Bill 2008 comes into operation.

AIMS 2009

1st All Ireland Mammal Symposium

Venue: Waterford Institute of Technology

Date: 6th-8th November 2009



For more information please contact us at

aims2009waterford@gmail.com

Website: www.allirelandmammalsymposium.org

BATLAS 2010 – Review of 2008 field season

Ruth Carden

Firstly and foremost, I wish to sincerely thank all those volunteers who surveyed 10km squares during the 2008 field season. It's great to know that people on our island have such enthusiasm and interest in our flying mammal species – many thanks to one and all!

Why is it important to know the distribution of our bats?

Current data on bat species can provide baselines from which to monitor changes in ranges over longer time scales. Patterns and trends of bat distributions can allow us to acquire knowledge about the preservation of rare and endemic species or those

of particular interest that may have special species' requirements, in terms of habitat conservation. Currently, there is a paucity of records on bat distributions across the island for the four most easily recognised bat species (common and soprano pipistrelles, Daubenton's bat and Leisler's bat). BATLAS 2010 proposes to amend these large gaps in our knowledge and to identify the current island-wide distribution of these four species.

2008 BATLAS 2010 field season: 19 volunteers managed to successfully survey 256 10km squares (Figure 1) in 2008 field season for the four bat species. There are about 750 10km squares in the Republic of Ireland. The adverse weather conditions certainly

hampered the number of overall surveyed 10km squares. A further 16 volunteers could not complete their surveys due to the unfavourable weather conditions. Of these 236 surveyed 10km squares, 35 of these did not have any bats detected. These were mainly associated with coastal and mountainous regions. BATLAS2010 2008 field season recorded ipistrelle bat in 72% of the surveyed squares, soprano pipistrelle in 76%, Leisler's bat in 61% and the Daubenton's bat was found in 55% of the surveyed squares (Please see annual report for Figures to accompany these summary statistics).

2009 field season: This year's field season is nearly upon us and I am hoping the weather warms up at night soon, as well as for long extended dry spells which will not only benefit our flying friends, but also us the field surveyors! We still have a fair bit to do in terms of island wide coverage, in particular the midlands and northerly regions have obvious gaps. I will primarily be focused on surveying all squares along the coastal regions and relatively inaccessible regions as well as any obvious gaps in our coverage. Squares are being allocated to all volunteers at present. The methodology is simple and straightforward; please contact me for further details. To complete each surveyed square should take about 1 hour, or less.

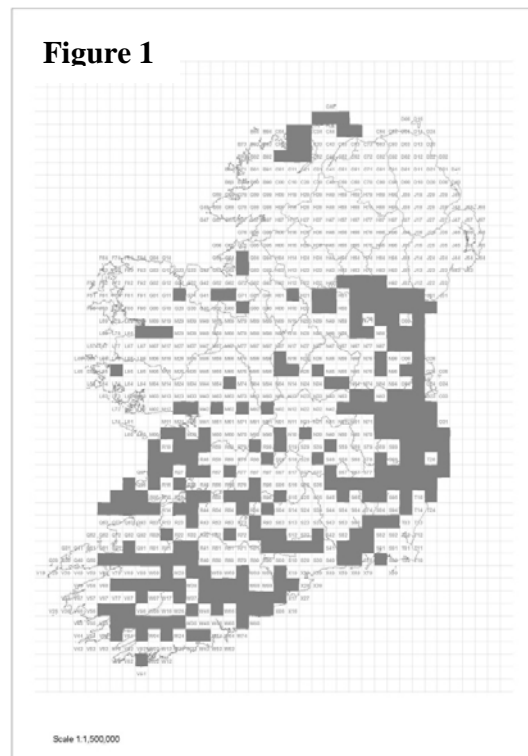
Additionally, the squares in Northern Ireland will be surveyed this summer with the financial support of the Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA). Thus, we should have the entire island surveyed for these four bat species by the end of this year.

If you wish to help and participate with the BATLAS2010 survey please contact me directly via e-mail for further details and 10km square allocations/coverage BATLAS2010@gmail.com or info@batconservationireland.org. We will provide a special Identification card to aid all BATLAS 2010 volunteers. This contains a key to species identification and descriptions of sounds that each species makes when heard through a heterodyne detector. It would be beneficial to have attended at least one BCI training workshop if you're thinking of helping us with this particular survey (see Events).

Even surveying one 10km square in your area is of great help to our project and these wonderful important mammals. Please help us to attain entire island coverage by the end of this field season! We are grateful to both NPWS and The Heritage Council (2009 Wildlife Grant) for providing funding for this project and the cooperation of CIBR personnel (Centre of Irish Bat Research, see Autumn/Winter2008 The Natterer). Stay tuned for further updates in the next issue of The Natterer.

Please see BCReland's annual report for further information on the BATLAS 2010 and results from 2008 on our Publications sections of the website: www.batconservationireland.org.

Figure 1



The Natterer

Spring/Summer 2009