

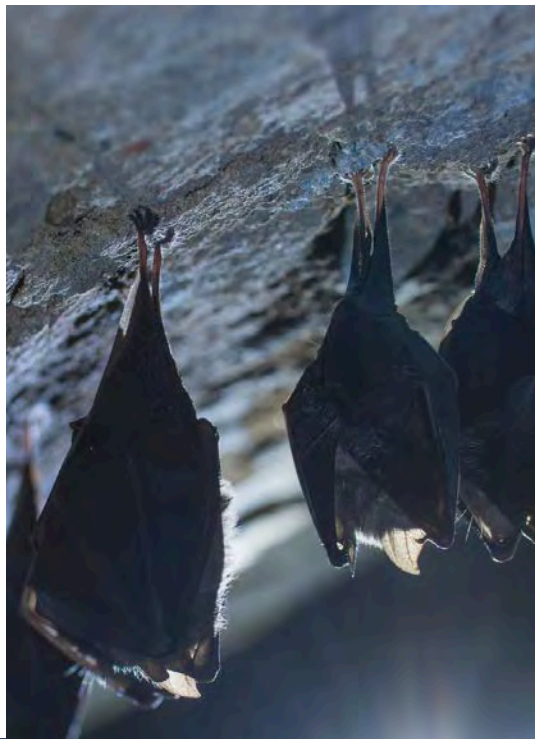
BAT CONSERVATION IRELAND

ANNUAL REPORT
2023



BAT CONSERVATION
IRELAND

Our vision is for humans and bats to co-exist in harmony in Ireland



C o n t e n t s

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ABOUT US



BAT CONSERVATION IRELAND

Mission Statement

Bat Conservation Ireland is an independent, non-profit, charity that is Ireland's leading authority on bats. We conduct monitoring and research to increase knowledge of all Irish bat species, and work to secure and expand existing bat populations, and where feasible to extend their ranges. We aim to develop a genuine and widespread understanding and appreciation of bats amongst the public, state agencies and other organisations, and to secure consistent protection of all bat species and the ecological infrastructure necessary to support them.

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Objectives

Bat Conservation Ireland's main objective is *'the advancement of education and the promotion of the conservation and study of bats on the island of Ireland and elsewhere in the world'.*

This is carried out through:

Education: Disseminating education materials;

Community Engagement: Giving talks and leading bat walks;

Conservation: Carrying out nationwide surveys and monitoring of bats;

Collaboration: Acting as an umbrella group for local bat groups;

Data Research: Providing a central repository for bat records.

Values

A core set of values guides all aspects of the work of Bat Conservation Ireland

Professionalism: We are committed to promoting the conservation of bats and bat habitats through science-based education, emerging research and contemporary best practices;

Collaboration: Together we are stronger and through collaboration our work is better as we strive to achieve our collective goals;

Learning: By learning from our experiences and each other, and implementing those learnings, we are continuously moving forward, innovating, and improving;

Respect: We foster and safeguard a culture where everyone's contributions and relationships are respectful and respected;

Integrity: We consistently conduct ourselves ethically with honesty, openness, fairness and accountability;

Diversity: We value the different ideas, strengths, interests, and cultural backgrounds that make our organisation successful. We welcome healthy debate and differences of opinion;

Reflection: We continuously monitor and evaluate our plans and performance to ensure that we meet our goals efficiently and effectively.

GOVERNANCE

Bat Conservation Ireland is managed by a Governing Council, who oversee the day-to-day running of the organisation. Council for 2023 were:

Co Chair: John Curtin	Emma Boston
Co Chair: Caroline Shiel	Anna Collins
Treasurer: Chris Peppiatt	Jason Guile (Co-Opted)
Company Secretary: Brian Keeley	Ronan O'Connor (Co-Opted)
Eimear Barrett (Co-Opted)	Tanya Slattery

Charity No: 13016	Charity Registered No: 20039417
Tax Reference No: 9781345A	Tax Clearance No: 515771
Company No: 494343	

Registered Office: Carmichael Centre, 4-7, North Brunswick Street, Dublin 7, D07 RHA8
Auditors & Company Law Advisors: O'Dwyer Delaney, Auditors & Accountants, 33, Fitzwilliam Street Upper, Dublin D02 TF82.
Bankers: Bank of Ireland, Ashbourne, Co. Meath.

We are members of the following organisations:

- Irish Environmental Network
- The Wheel
- Affiliated with: Bat Life Europe

Bat Conservation Ireland has adopted and implemented the Charities Governance Code issued by the Charities Regulator. It reported on its compliance with the code formally as required by the regulator in October 2023.



John Curtin



Caroline Shiel



Chris Peppiatt



Brian Keeley



Eimear Barrett



Emma Boston



Anna Collins



Jason Guile



Ronan O'Connor



Tanya Slattery

SNAPSHOT OF 2023

CONSERVATION

- 5 Monitoring Schemes
- 516 Volunteers
- 761 Surveys completed

- 629 Queries Answered
- 129,403 website page views

EDUCATION

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

- 10 active bat groups;
- 14,450 followers on social media

- Holds over 100,000 bat records
- Research collaborations with UCD and ATU
- Member of EU COST Action Network: CLIMBATS

RESEARCH & DATA

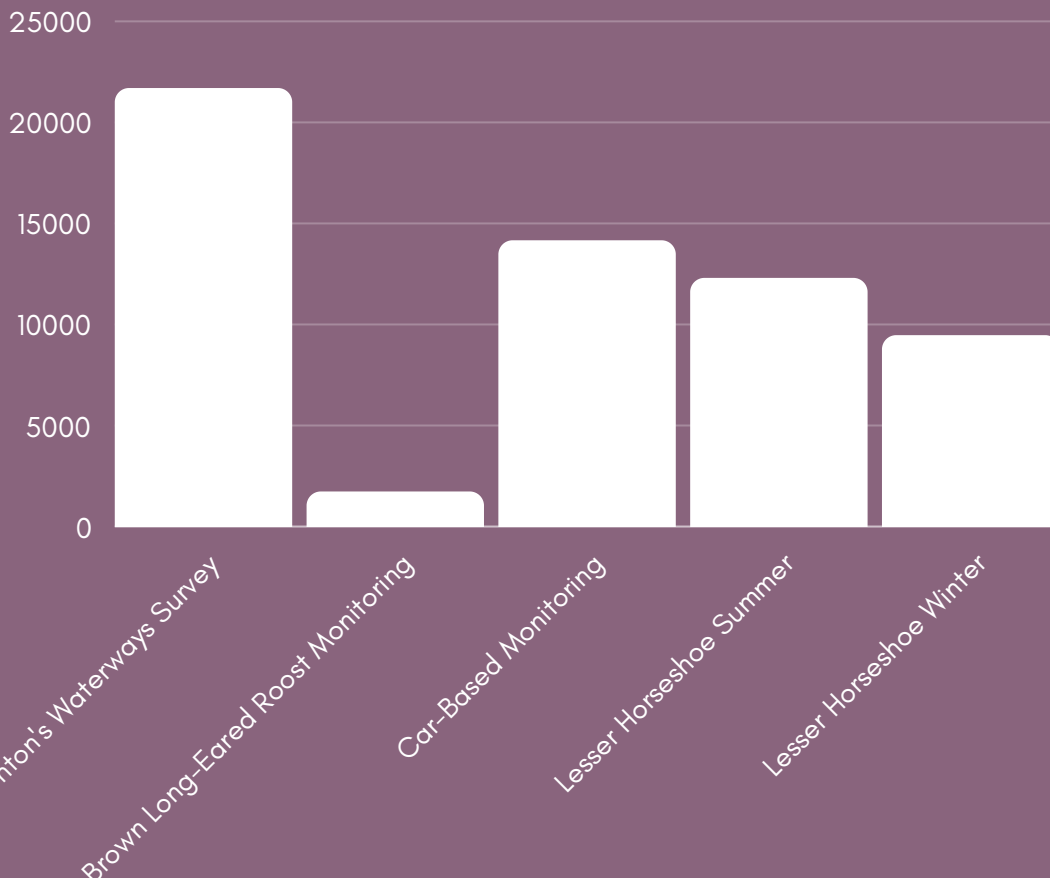


FIGURE 1.

Number of bat passes or individual bats counted by each scheme of the Irish Bat Monitoring Programme in 2023

Main Objectives pursued and achieved during 2023

education

conservation

community engagement

research

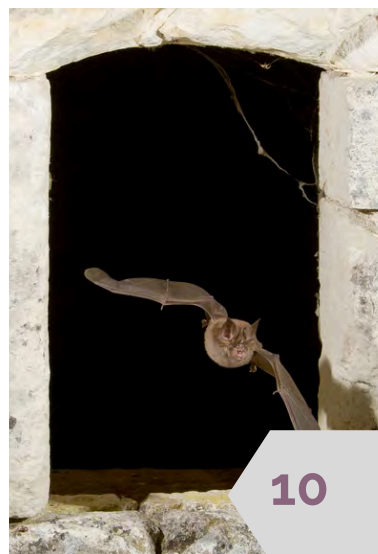
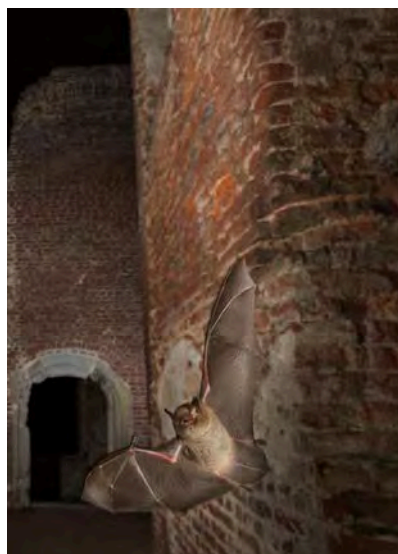
collaboration

EDUCATION

Ireland is currently home to 9 resident species of bat, all of which are protected under the Wildlife Act 1976 and subsequent amendments. It is an offence to intentionally disturb, injure or kill a bat or disturb its resting place.

Levels of education in Ireland differ in terms of knowledge that bats are resident here and also around their protected status. A substantial proportion of Bat Conservation Ireland's work is dedicated to educating the public about bats and addressing conflicts that can sometimes arise between bats and householders, where bats are very likely to roost. Our educational activities include the following:

- Answering bat-related queries through our website and Facebook page;
- Facilitating and updating educational material through 4 websites:
 - Bat Conservation Ireland - www.batconservationireland.org
 - Learn About Bats - www.learnaboutbats.com
 - Bats and Bugs - www.batsandbugs.ie
 - Online Training Platform - <https://training.batconservationireland.org/>
- Organising bat walks and talks for the general public across the country;
- Conducting and participating in seminars and workshops to facilitate additional learning for our members and the wider public;
- Issuing a bi-annual Newsletter to update our members on our work;
- Hosting our triennial bat conference to bring together bat experts and share latest research and data;



EDUCATION

Queries

Bat Conservation Ireland operates a queries service through email and our social media platforms, which is facilitated by its staff members. While each query is individual in nature, in general queries can fall into a number of different categories as follows:

1. Householders who have a bat roost in their house and either
 - a. need further information;
 - b. the roost has become problematic and they need advice about what to do;
 - c. bats are entering the dwelling space in their house and they need advice;
 - d. they want to carry out works to their property and need further advice;
 - e. they want the bats removed and relocated.
2. A member of the public has found a grounded bat and needs further advice;
3. A member of the public wants to object to planning permission and either
 - requests assistance from Bat Conservation Ireland; or
 - need further information in relation to bats and planning permission
4. A member or member of the public wants to learn more about bats and would like more information on any courses run by Bat Conservation Ireland or educational materials for children
5. Student enquiries about internships or participation in research projects

In 2023 staff dealt with approximately 629 queries; 548 by e-mail through our website and 81 through our Facebook Messenger.

Bat Conservation Ireland, sees this service as essential for educating the general public around bats' status as a protected species, which in the long-term leads to better outcomes for bats.

EDUCATION

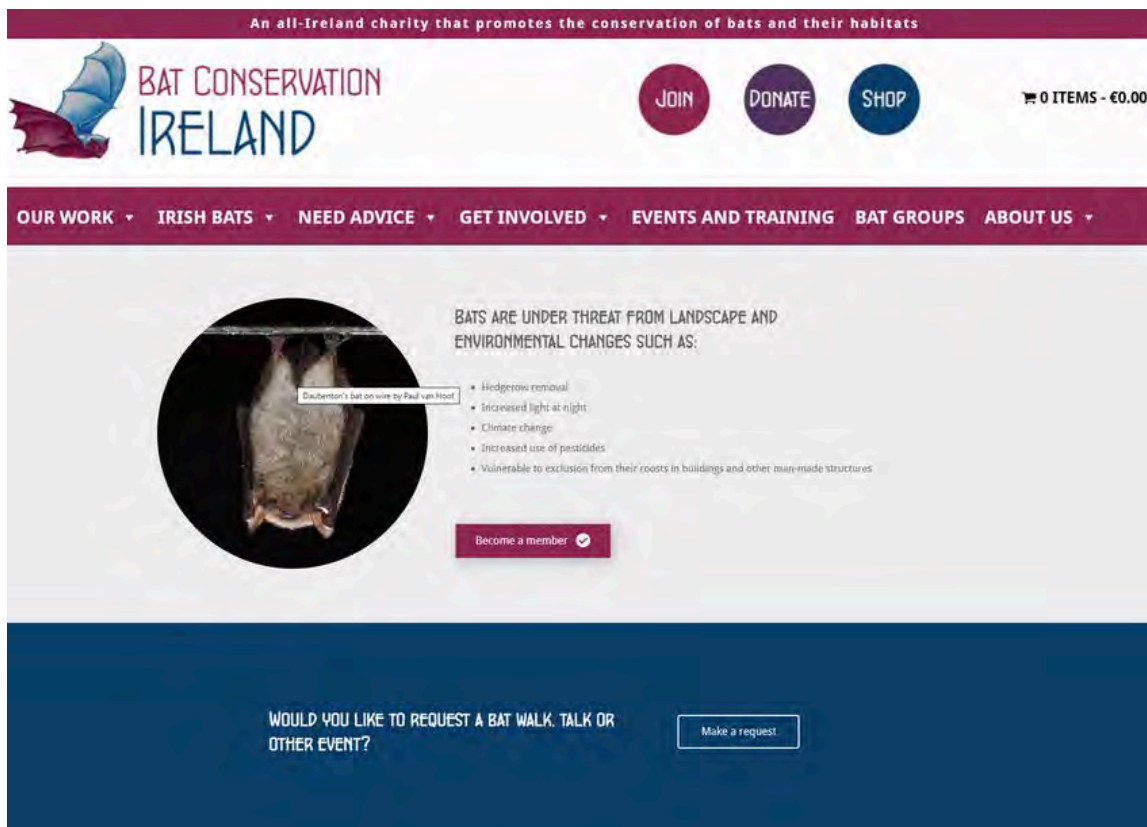
Online Presence - website

Bat Conservation Ireland's main website - www.batconservationireland.org - provides information about the organisation and what we do, as well as general information about bats and more specifically to householders on bat roosts. Our website is an effective educational tool, as the following statistics will verify:

Page Views: 115,799

First Time Visitors: 36,000

Bat Sightings Submitted: 296



The screenshot shows the homepage of the Bat Conservation Ireland website. At the top, a dark red banner contains the text "An all-Ireland charity that promotes the conservation of bats and their habitats". Below this is the logo for Bat Conservation Ireland, featuring a stylized bat silhouette and the text "BAT CONSERVATION IRELAND". To the right of the logo are three circular buttons labeled "JOIN", "DONATE", and "SHOP". Further right, a shopping cart icon indicates "0 ITEMS - €0.00". A dark red navigation bar below the logo contains the following menu items: "OUR WORK", "IRISH BATS", "NEED ADVICE", "GET INVOLVED", "EVENTS AND TRAINING", "BAT GROUPS", and "ABOUT US". The main content area features a circular image of a bat with a caption "Daubenton's bat on site by Paul van Hoof". To the right of the image, the text reads "BATS ARE UNDER THREAT FROM LANDSCAPE AND ENVIRONMENTAL CHANGES SUCH AS:" followed by a bulleted list: "• Hedgerow removal", "• Increased light at night", "• Climate change", "• Increased use of pesticides", and "• Vulnerable to exclusion from their roosts in buildings and other man-made structures". Below the list is a "Become a member" button with a checkmark icon. At the bottom of the page, a dark blue banner contains the text "WOULD YOU LIKE TO REQUEST A BAT WALK, TALK OR OTHER EVENT?" and a "Make a request" button.

EDUCATION



Learn About Bats
with Bat Conservation Ireland



Bat Conservation Ireland runs a website that provides educational material for our younger bat enthusiasts, aged 6 - 12 - www.learnaboutbats.org. Children can learn about bats and their lifecycle, download materials, which provide a fun way to enhance their learning and there is also a resource section for teachers, providing materials they can bring into the classroom. The statistics in 2023, for Learn About Bats are as follows:



Page Views: 10,892

First Time Visitors: 4,500



EDUCATION

Online Presence - Social Media

Bat Conservation Ireland's engaged on 3 social media platforms in 2023 – Facebook, Instagram and X (formerly Twitter). Facebook and Instagram provide us with the opportunity to engage more on a community level, with members, supporters and across our 10 bat groups. X, (formerly Twitter), on the other hand, gives us the opportunity to reach out more to the science-based community and share more of our research projects, data and papers.

In 2023, we our social media following over the course of the year increased on both Facebook and Instagram by 844. By the end of 2023, we had 10,150 Facebook followers and 1,300 Instagram followers. X (formerly Twitter) followers remained unchanged at almost 3,000 followers.

Our reach through both channels has been very successful, as these stats show:

Facebook – 59,300

Twitter – 9,318

Instagram – 2,100



EDUCATION

Events

2023 was a very active year for Bat Conservation Ireland and our affiliate county bat groups. Our biggest highlight was the return of our long awaited Irish Bat Conference, after a break of 6 years and there was a great appetite for all our bat-loving friends to come together share research, information about conservation efforts and new developments in the batty world.

Additionally, there was a great appetite for Bat Conservation Ireland members, bat groups, volunteers and the wider public to get out into nature and engage with many activities run around the country to learn more about bats and promote their protection and conservation

Key Events for Bat Conservation Ireland carried out in 2023 were:

- The 10th Irish Bat Conference
- Launch of Bats and Bugs Project Results
- Biodiversity Week, where we held series of online and in-person events which helped educate adults and children learn about bats, their habitats and the importance of them to our environment;



EDUCATION

Events

- The development and launch of our Online Training Platform, which saw us launch the first course 'Introduction to Bats and using Detectors', which is free to complete to those who register;
- Delivery of 2 in-person training weekends on 'Bat Detector and Survey Training' and 'Bat Identification and Handling' and an additional bespoke training course delivered to NPWS rangers on 'Bat Identification and Handling';
- Heritage Week, where we carried out a number of educational events, highlighting the importance of bats in heritage structures and the wider environment;
- Attending 2 of the Tidy Towns regional awards ceremonies, which saw Gort TT and Sneem TT honoured for the completion of their amazing bat murals in their towns;
- Participating in the Rediscovery Centre's 'Lets Talk Science Festival', which reached 35,000 students;

Online presentations/talks carried out by Bat Conservation Ireland in 2023 were:

- Thursday Talks – Bats and Bugs: Project Findings



EDUCATION

10th Irish Bat Conference

After 3 years of postponement, we were thrilled to host the 10th Irish Bat Conference in the Athlone Springs Hotel on March 11th and 12th 2023.

Following such a long hiatus, there was a great appetite for volunteers, conservationists, academics, ecologists and those with a general interest in bats to come together, share information and learn more about what had been happening in the bat world over the past 6 years!

We were delighted that Minister Malcolm Noonan TD., gave the welcoming address, sharing his experiences of participating in our bat monitoring programme, many years ago, as well as highlighting key objectives of his office on biodiversity and environmental protection.

Our invited Keynote Speaker Prof. Fiona Mathews followed with a global update on wind energy development and its impact on bats. This was followed by a number of talks on bat monitoring in Ireland and France as well as bat activity studies from Cork and Cavan.

The second session included talks on genetics and ageing in bats from staff and students in UCD, with this affording many of the students their first opportunity to present their research, due to Covid restrictions in the previous 3 years.

Following the lunch break, a second keynote presentation was provided by Enda Mullen of the NPWS highlighting some of the recent publications and legislative updates pertaining to bats. This was then followed by a session of conservation presentations, on some very interesting projects.

The last session on Saturday related to DNA analysis of Irish bat faeces to determine

EDUCATION

10th Irish Bat Conference

ecosystem services in terms of insect consumption. The final presentation of the day was a Keynote by Dr Hugo Rebelo from the University of Porto, Portugal, on landscape adaptations for bats with respect to climate change. The Vincent Weir Student Presentation Prize was awarded to James Nolan of UCD for his work on the Bats and Bugs project, a citizen science led project investigating bat ecosystem services in Ireland.

Events on Saturday evening finished up with a wine reception, giving attendees an opportunity to network and share ideas and projects on bat conservation.

Day 2 of the conference was made up of a series of workshops on current issues of importance in bat conservation and learning more about these elusive mammals.

We had workshops on the following:

- Wind Farm Bat Monitoring and Mitigation;
- Bats and Street Lighting;
- Bats and Heritage Structures;
- Using Imaging Technology for Bat Surveys;
- Running a Bat Walk or Talk; and
- Final discussion on running a Bat Group.



EDUCATION

10th Irish Bat Conference

Overall the conference was very favourably received with overwhelmingly positive feedback. 130 delegates attended the two days making it the best attended Irish Bat Conference to-date and we were delighted to see such an interest in bats from the Irish audience.

We were also honoured to announce one of the initiatives to remember bat enthusiast and dear friend Aoibheann Gaughran, which will be through a Memorial Award, to be launched later this year.

We were very grateful for the grant-aided support of the National Parks and Wildlife Service, in-kind sponsorship for conference materials and raffle prizes from The Heritage Council and a number of ecology equipment suppliers, the Bat Store, wigum, Titley Scientific, Wildlife Acoustics and environmental consultancies, MKO, O'Donnell Environmental and Scott Cawley.



EDUCATION

Biodiversity Week 2023

Biodiversity Week is a key week in the calendar for Bat Conservation Ireland and 2023 we hosted a number of bat walks and talks at various locations around the country. It was great to get out and about meeting lots of different people and to share our knowledge and passion for these wonderful mammals. Our activities during the week were as follows:



- Bat Walk and Talk, Newbridge, Co. Kildare, facilitated by Kildare Bat Group
- Bat Walk and Talk – Castlepollard, Co. Westmeath, facilitated by Midlands Bat Group
- Bat talk at Gorey Library, Co. Wexford, delivered by Wexford Bat Group
- Bat Walk and talk at Lough Muckno, Co. Monaghan, delivered by Niamh Roche, Bat Conservation Ireland
- Bat walk and talk, St. Catherine’s Park, Leixlip, Co. Kildare, facilitated by Kildare Bat Group
- Bats of Merlin Woods, Co. Galway, facilitated by Galway Bat Group
- Thursday Talks – Bats and Bugs: Project Findings
- Bat Walk with Wicklow Bat Group at Killruddery House and Gardens, facilitated by Wicklow Bat Group
- Bat walk and talk, Sallins, Co. Kildare, facilitated by Kildare Bat Group
- Bat walk and talk as part of ‘Bats on campus’ project, UCG, facilitated by Galway Bat Group
- Bats & Dark Skies Walk – Keenagh Loop Trail Head, Co. Mayo facilitated by Wild Nephin National Park and Mayo Dark Sky Park and Mayo Bat Group

EDUCATION

Biodiversity Week 2023

- Bat River Walk at Slaney River, Enniscorthy, Co. Wexford facilitated by Wexford Bat Group
- Bat Walk and Talk at Sonairte, Co. Meath, facilitated by Meath Bat Group
- Bat walk and talk at Kylemore Abbey, Co. Galway, facilitated by Galway Bat Group
- Bat walk and talk, Clara, Offaly, facilitated by Kildare Bat Group

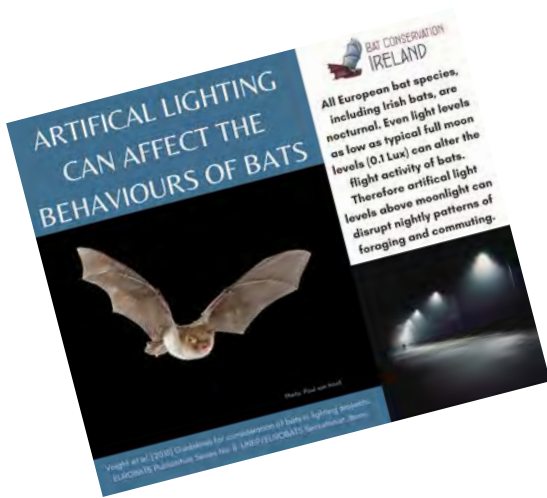


All in all, we had a hugely successful Biodiversity Week 2023! However, as always, we couldn't carry out the amount of bat walks, talks and educational events without our fantastic bat groups, who every year provide excellent educational opportunities for the public to learn more about bats, their habitats and why they are so important for biodiversity. We would like to say a huge thank you to our Bat Groups who carry out all this work voluntarily and so passionately.



EDUCATION

We also carried out a number of online educational campaigns during the week, where we shared posts through our social media channels on the effects of street and other lighting on bats and their behaviours. These posts ran during biodiversity week and had great light engagement, as the stats indicate below. We also ran our hugely popular 'Bats out the Back' project, where we ask people to submit bat sightings in their local area.



Bats out the Back

Submit your bat sightings and track bat activity in your area!



Stats for engagement of these posts are as follows:

Post	Reach	Engagement	Shares
Bats out the Back (Submit Sightings)	9,584	224	73
Bats and Lighting Campaign	11,798	309	82
BDW launch of activities	2,234	97	12

EDUCATION

Training

Irish Bat Monitoring Programme

Bat Conservation Ireland runs Ireland's only All-Ireland bat monitoring programme, as part of our conservation efforts. Volunteers are essential for us to carry out the level of monitoring that we do. Every year new volunteers are trained as part of this programme and this not only helps create more citizen scientists around the country, but also helps develop unique skills for those involved.

In 2023, our Project Managers trained 9 new volunteer teams on the Car-Based Monitoring Scheme, with with 3 online training workshops facilitated. 152 new volunteers were trained for the for the All Ireland Daubenton's Waterway Survey. All of the new volunteers were trained online in 4 training sessions.

Thursday Talks

In May as part of Biodiversity Week, we ran a 'Thursday Talk' on the results of the Bats and Bugs project, launched in April 2023. We heard James Nolan, B.Sc. M.Sc. from UCD's Batlab, who carried out DNA analysis of bat droppings that were sent in by citizen scientists from roosts all across Ireland. In his talk, James outlined what kinds of bats were present and what those bats had been eating. This work broadens our understanding of the ecosystem services bats provide in Ireland in terms of consumption of pest insects. It also opens up new possibilities for using bat dropping samples as indicators of environmental quality.

BAT CONSERVATION IRELAND

25 MAY 2023 - 7.30PM

THURSDAY TALKS

BATS AND BUGS PROJECT: THE RESULTS!

JOIN BAT CONSERVATION IRELAND FOR AN ONLINE EVENING TALK!

JAMES NOLAN FROM UCD WILL PRESENT KEY FINDINGS OF THE BATS AND BUGS PROJECT.

FIND OUT MORE ABOUT:

- HOW CITIZEN SCIENTISTS HELPED COLLECT THE SAMPLES
- WHAT BATS EAT IN IRELAND
- HOW BATS MAY HELP CONTROL INSECT PESTS
- AND LOTS OF OTHER EXCITING INFORMATION WE CAN FIND IN BAT POOP!

WWW.BATSANDBUGS.IE

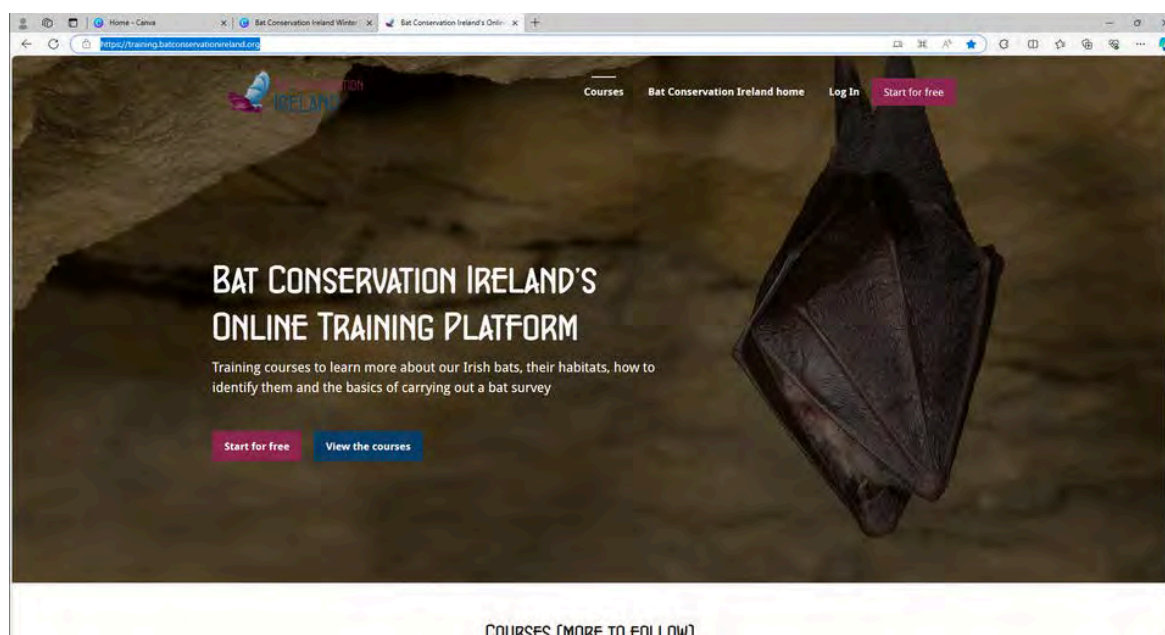
EDUCATION

Online Training Platform

Over the past number of years, we have been trialling different educational online offerings such as the 'Introduction to the World of Bats' 4-part training, the Thursday Talks and various online seminars during Biodiversity Week.

Traditionally, we have always carried out training in-person, however with the changes that swept the world in 2020, we had to look at different ways to try to reach our bat-loving audience. We realised from the courses we carried out and feedback that we received that there was a real appetite and demand for a certain portion of our educational offerings to be carried out online. This not only reduces the cost for participants (in terms of travel and sometimes accommodation), but also helps us reduce the carbon footprint associated with carrying out in-person training.

In March 2023, we applied to the Heritage Council for funding to build and Online Training Platform, which would see us roll out some initial modules, with a view to developing further modules as time went on and the demand arose for particular kinds of bat-related training.

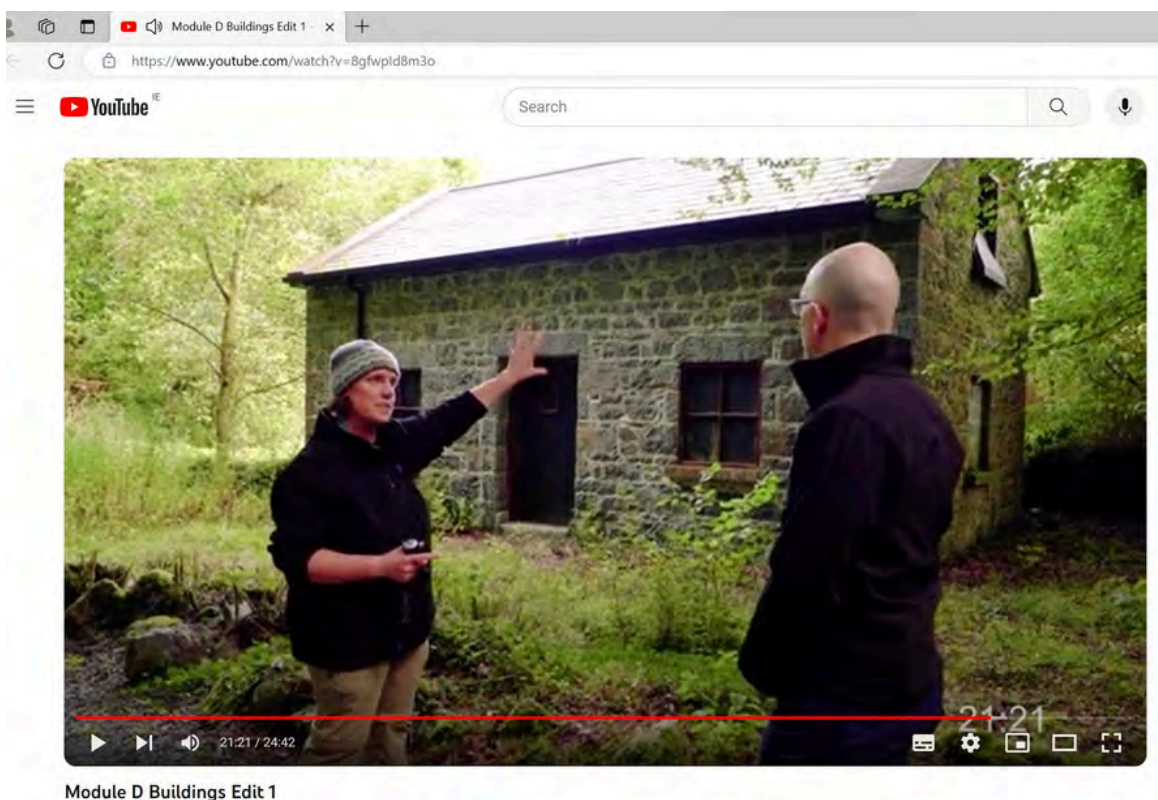


EDUCATION

Online Training Platform

Once the funding was confirmed, we issued the tender for a filming company to film and edit the training material. Niamh Roche took the lead in terms of managing the delivery of the project, Niamh and David spent a lot of time putting together the various aspects of course content and narration to accompany this material. Filming took place mostly in August featuring bat expert Tina Aughney and our new bat ecologist, David Clarke (please see camera still below).

The Online Training Platform was launched in early November 2023, with the first course free of charge - Introduction to Bats and Using Detectors. This course contains 2 modules and provides a wealth of information to those who register to complete the course. You can find full details of the training platform and how to access this course here: <https://training.batconservationireland.org/>



EDUCATION

Publications

Biodiversity Ireland - Spring/Summer 2023

Biodiversity Tales - Bats

Dr. Niamh Roche contributed to this publication produced by the National Biodiversity Data Centre, to update readers on the projects Bat Conservation Ireland were working on in 2023, including:

- 10th Irish Bat Conference
- Launch of the results of 'Bats and Bugs'
- Tidy Towns Bat Mural
- Biodiversity Week
- BCIreland Training Courses
- Irish Bat Monitoring Programme

BIODIVERSITY TALES



Bats

Summer 2023 was a busy time for Bat Conservation Ireland! In 2023, we resumed in-person training, with a number of evening and weekend workshops. These were held in counties Meath, Cavan and Wicklow in the summer months and were very well attended by amateur enthusiasts, professional ecologists and NPWS staff. In view of increasing demand for bat training, we applied for and were successful in receiving funding from the Heritage Council to help develop an online training platform. We are currently filming and recording modules on how to identify bats using tunable detectors, how to design bat surveys, how to survey for bats in buildings, bridges and trees, along with various other topics. We hope this development will help ensure the demand for training is met and that it will help both volunteers and professionals upskill at their leisure during the winter months. We plan to keep adding material to this in the coming years while continuing in-person training in the summer where needed. We are looking forward to launching the first modules in November this year. We also warmly welcomed a new member of staff, Dr David Clarke, to our ranks in May. David researched and developed monitoring schemes for long-tailed bats in New Zealand. He returned home this year and almost immediately took up the new role with us. David has had a busy summer getting to grips with the Irish Bat Monitoring Programme and up to speed with the Irish species. David will present a talk on his experiences of working on bats in New Zealand at our AGM in December. Bat Conservation Ireland members are welcome to attend.

The Irish Bat Monitoring Programme continued in 2023. Hundreds of surveyors, north and south, contributed to counts at brown long-eared bat roosts, with transects along rivers counting Daubenton's bats, and drove transects while bat detecting along roads across the island. Despite the rain in July hampering the survey efforts of some teams, it still looks like we will have good coverage for all our schemes for 2023. From May to August this year, we ran pilot woodland bat species monitoring trials in Meath, Cavan, Kildare and Wicklow, with the help of NPWS and volunteer teams, who carried out walked transects and static monitoring of bats. We look forward to analysing the data and making recommendations for how to proceed. Hopefully by spring 2024 we will have devised a robust method for monitoring population trends in white-necked and Natterer's bats. Thanks to all volunteers who contributed to our monitoring schemes in 2023.

Dr Niamh Roche
BAT CONSERVATION IRELAND
niamh@batconservationireland.org

Biodiversity Ireland - Autumn/Winter 2023

Biodiversity Tales - Bats

Dr. Niamh Roche contributed to this publication, to update readers on the projects Bat Conservation Ireland were working on, including:

- Online Training Platform
- Irish Bat Monitoring Programme
- Roll out of the Woodland Pilot Monitoring Programme to counties Cavan, Kildare, Meath and Wicklow

BIODIVERSITY TALES

Bats

We haven't even started the field season but we've already hit the ground running in 2023! March saw the first Irish Bat Conference in almost six years, when 130 delegates convened in Athlone to hear the latest in Irish and international bat research and conservation. The conference was opened by Minister Malcolm Noonan, who is himself a former Daubenton's Bat Waterways volunteer, and we then had a series of excellent speakers for a packed day. Keynote talks were from Fiona Mathews (UK) about bats and windfarm, Rinda Muller from the NPWS about bat legislation, and Hugo Rebelo (Portugal) who described work of Portuguese scientists to become more climate resilient and bat friendly. We also had eight student speakers presenting on a variety of research done on bats from Cork to Brittany. We are already looking forward to the launch of results of the Bats and Bugs project in the Royal Irish Academy on April 21st. This project was funded by the Cosúmánuí Foundation of Ireland and NPWS in 2021 and 2022, with the aim to determine more about the ecosystem services Irish bats provide in terms of pest insect consumption. Volunteer bat roost custodians across Ireland's most popular bat deepings from 120 sites to UCD for DNA analysis. UCD's James Nolan and Owen Hurry will present their work at this event and we will also launch a beautiful explainer animation video about the project. For details and tickets, see Bat Conservation Ireland's Events page (www.batconservationireland.org/events). Following on from the Tidy Towns Ireland Special Awards 2022, Seem Tidy Towns made quick work of their prize from Bat Conservation Ireland to paint a bat mural on the entrance to Seem Creche, Tourism Office. We were delighted to see this pipistrelle (and its dinner!) come to fruition and to sponsor such an innovative way to share awareness and conservation of our beautiful Irish bats. In May this year, we will collaborate with the NIBIC to run a workshop on recording bats, which will be held in Drigan Park, Co. Meath. This will include talks on Irish bat ecology and identification. We will also check out preserved specimens and run bat identification parties to key them out to species. Weather permitting, we will take a walk around the grounds of Dalgan Park after dark to see what bats are present and listen in on their calls using bat detectors. We are also gearing up for Biodiversity Week towards the end of May, with Bat Groups across the country planning a series of in-person bat walks and talks. We will also host some online talks and social media stories during the week, so keep an eye on our Facebook page for details to come.



The 10th Irish Bat Conference took place in Athlone in March 2023.

The mural (Ireland) by Seem Tidy Towns

Dr Niamh Roche
BAT CONSERVATION IRELAND
niamh@batconservationireland.org

EDUCATION

Media

Bats and bat conservation work received very good media coverage in 2023. This work is important, as it provides another avenue for us to engage with the public, that not only are bats a protected species, but that they play a very important role in biodiversity and sustaining a healthy environment.

Media pieces which featured Bat Conservation Ireland, or which we contributed to were:

- 11 April 2023 - Niamh Roche, Project Manger of the Bats and Bugs Project carried out an interview with Terry Flanagan, as part of 'Mooney Goes Wild' on RTE Radio 1 to discuss this project and bats;
- 1 May 2023 - Niamh Roche, Projects Manager with the Irish Bat Monitoring Programme carried out an interview with Terry Flanagan, as part of 'Mooney Goes Wild' on RTE Radio 1 to discuss bats generally;
- 1 May 2023 - Niamh Roche, Projects Manager with the Irish Bat Monitoring Programme carried out an interview with Aisling Kiernan, as part of the News for Northern Sound FM to discuss bats at Lough Muckno for Biodiversity Week;
- 27 May 2023 - Niamh Roche featured on 'The Business' on RTE Radio 1 with Siofra Mulqueen discussing bats as endangered Animals
- 10 June 2023 - Tina Aughney was interviewed for the article 'Counting on a new survey for woodland bats' for the Anglo Celt - <https://www.anglocelt.ie/2023/06/10/counting-on-a-new-survey-for-woodland-bats/>
- 14 June 2023 - Bat Conservation Ireland was mentioned in 'Portlaoise Men's Shed marks its 10th Anniversary as it goes from strength to strength' in laoistoday.ie - <https://www.laoistoday.ie/2023/06/14/portlaoise-mens-shed-marks-its-10th-anniversary-as-it-goes-from-strength-to-strength/>

EDUCATION

Media

- 18 June 2023 - Niamh Roche carried out an interview with Donegal Daily online about the Car-based bat monitoring, as part of the Irish Bat Monitoring Programme;
- 2 August 2023 - 'Hang out' with bats - they're fascinating creatures - Anja Murray, Irish Examiner <https://www.irishexaminer.com/lifestyle/outdoors/arid-41195365.html>;
- 16 August 2023 - Niamh Roche spoke to Gerry Kelly on 'Late Lunch' on LMFM about bats generally;
- 24 August 2023 - 'Wildlife: A night county bats on the Ilen' - Southern Star featured information about the All Ireland Daubenton's Survey - <https://www.southernstar.ie/great-outdoors/wildlife-a-night-counting-bats-on-the-ilen-4270687>
- 19 October 2023 - Niamh Roche spoke to Terry Flanagan on 'Mooney Goes Wild/Wildlife Documentary' on RTE Radio 1 about bats and hibernation;
- 06 December 2023 - Niamh Roche participated in a Podcast with the students of Inchicore Primary School to talk about the biodiversity of Inchicore, Dublin
- 13 November 2023 - Brian Keeley, Council Member with Bat Conservation Ireland contributed to the 'Ecolution: Bats are the Good Guys!' Podcast on RTE online - <https://www.rte.ie/kids/2023/1030/1413723-ecolution-bats-are-the-good-guys/>



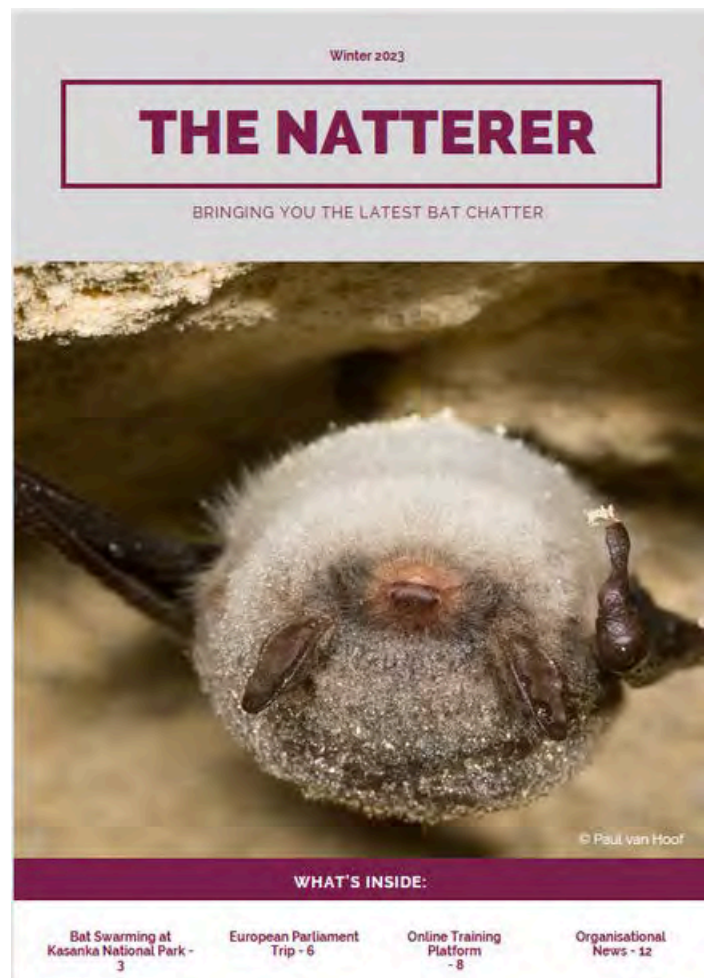
Photo: Ann Haigh

EDUCATION

Newsletter

Bat Conservation Ireland publishes a newsletter to update members about the work that we are doing and to share the latest information about developments in the world of bat conservation. In 2023, we published 2 newsletters, which were sent out to our membership, as follows:

- The Natterer Summer 2023
- The Natterer Winter 2023



COMMUNITY ENAGAGEMENT

Bat Groups

There are currently 10 bat groups around the country that are affiliated with Bat Conservation Ireland. Galway Bat Group preceded the foundation of Bat Conservation Ireland, with its formation going back to the 1980's. The Bat Groups offer the opportunity for members to get more involved in activities in their local communities, as well as develop their bat-related skills, such as carrying out roost counts and bat surveys. It is also an opportunity for like minded individuals to come together around a shared interest in biodiversity and our natural wildlife.

The bat groups currently affiliated with Bat Conservation Ireland are:

- Cavan Bat Group
- Donegal Bat Group
- Dublin Bat Group
- Galway Bat Group
- Kildare Bat Group
- Limerick Bat Group
- Mayo Bat Group
- Meath Bat Group
- Midland Bat Group
- Wexford Bat Group
- Wicklow Bat Group



Additionally Northern Ireland Bat Group exists as an individual entity, however there are close links between Bat Conservation Ireland and all of the bat groups around the country. The groups had a great year, as they were able to get out and carry out in-person activities. Short reports from each of the groups follows.

COMMUNITY ENAGAGEMENT

Cavan Bat Group

There are currently 5 members of Cavan the group and they were very active on the Irish Bat Monitoring Schemes during the monitoring season, as follows:

All Ireland Daubenton's Bat Waterways Survey:

August 2023 - 2 surveys were carried out in Deerpark Forest, Virginia, Co. Cavan

Brown Long-eared Roost Monitoring Survey:

June/July/August 2023 - 3 roost counts were carried out at Drung Church, Co. Cavan

Car Based Monitoring:

July & August 2023 - Car Transect Survey was carried out in Co. Cavan

Bat Walk

Cavan Bat Group carried out a bat walk at Crosserlough, Co. Cavan in May 2023

Training

Members of Cavan Bat Group also participated in both of the training courses run by Bat Conservation Ireland:

- Bat Detector and Survey Training
- Bat Identification and Handling Training

Both of these courses were run over the summer in 2023.

COMMUNITY ENAGAGEMENT

Cavan Bat Group

Additionally, the group continued research, in conjunction with the Nathusius Pipistrelle Research Project, investigating the distribution of this species on lakes in County Cavan. For this second phase of the study in 2023, the group checked bat box schemes in the Killeshandra area, trapped foraging bats using a harp trap and acoustic lure, ringed four individual Nathusius' pipistrelles & tagged two additional Nathusius' pipistrelles to track their movements using radio telemetry. They also carried out dusk emergence counts at newly discovered Nathusius' pipistrelle roosts. Poor weather limited the number of trapping sessions in 2023.



Nathusius' pipistrelle with radio telemetry tag (Photo T. Aughney)



Harp trap at Town Lough, Killeshandra
(Photo K. McNabb)



Daubenton's bats in a bat box (Photo T. Aughney)

COMMUNITY ENAGAGEMENT

Dublin Bat Group



Dublin Bat Group continued an upward trend of interactions with the public in 2023, through bat walks and talks. The Group also began to formulate plans for continuous monitoring projects in South Dublin and in the Phoenix Park. The Bat Group continued to monitor the large Leisler's Bat roost discovered in the Phoenix Park during the summer of 2022 and noted that a large branch of the dead tree had broken off. Thankfully the roost remains unaffected and over 100 Leisler's bats were recorded emerging in June 2023.

Dublin Bat Group teamed up with several other organizations to carry out Bat Walk events in different areas: The OPW in the Phoenix Park, Tidy Towns in Rush and the Dodder Action Group in South Dublin.



Bat walk in Rush, North Co. Dublin.

Bat Walks

In May, Dublin Bat Group members Paul Scott and Kevin Delahunty led a bat walk in the Phoenix Park for Leif Barry of the OPW. There was a good turn out and before looking for bats the DGB members discussed bat ecology with the attendees. There were many interested children at this bat walk which made for a brilliant evening. The talk was aimed at the general public with limited existing knowledge of bats and

COMMUNITY ENAGAGEMENT

Dublin Bat Group



covered topics including:

- Bat species in Ireland and in the Phoenix Park.
- Interesting facts on our bat species.
- Important habitats that bats depend upon; and
- Where to find bats in the Phoenix Park and surrounding areas.

Species found on the walk included the Soprano Pipistrelle, Leisler's Bat and Common Pipistrelle.

A second bat walk was conducted here with Leif in September by Kevin Delahunty and Colm Clarke as well which also had a fantastic turn out, although with fewer children. Species found on the walk included the Soprano Pipistrelle, Leisler's Bat, Common Pipistrelle and the Daubenton's Bat.

Also in May, Kevin Delahunty and Kim Lake led a bat walk for Rush Tidy Towns in North County Dublin. This walk was promoted by Rush Tidy Towns on their social media accounts and there was a big turn out for the event, including a number of students from the local secondary school, St. Joseph's, Rush. The walk was conducted in St. Catherine's Woods - a relatively small woodland surrounded by well lit residential estates. However both Soprano Pipistrelle and Common Pipistrelle bats were recorded.

Corey Cannon, Kevin Delahunty and Kim Lake led a Bat Walk for the Dodder Action Group on the 21st of August 2023. There was a huge turnout at this event, beginning at the Dropping Well Pub in Milltown, South Dublin. The attendees were a diverse group of all ages and the event began with a discussion on Irish bats and on other species found throughout the world. After walking only a small section of the Dodder River, Soprano Pipistrelles were observed foraging in good numbers under the aqueduct. Both Leisler's Bats and Common Pipistrelle were also recorded before the group were led back up by the pub to the weir. Daubenton's Bats were also recorded at this location.

COMMUNITY ENAGAGEMENT

Dublin Bat Group



Bat Surveys

Emergence surveys

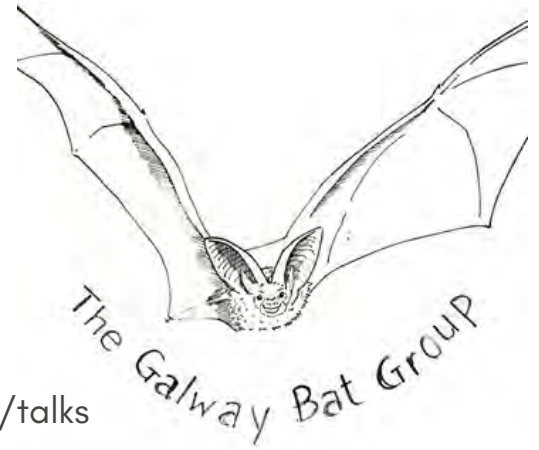
The group undertook an emergence survey at the site of the large Leisler's Bat roost in the Phoenix Park that was discovered in 2022 after the Group was contacted by a member of the public through their Facebook page. The emergence survey in June of 2022 recorded 142 bats emerging form the roost. Thankfully the roost is still in use after a large section of the tree had fallen down. Over 100 bats were recorded emerging in June 2023.

The OPW were contacted to ensure the tree would not be pulled down or destroyed while still being used as a roosting site.

COMMUNITY ENAGAGEMENT

Galway Bat Group

Galway Bat Group members were active in leading walks and talks throughout Galway city and county in 2023. Seven events took place, with six walk/talks occurring.



Activities kicked off in March 2023, when Susan Kerwin from Bat Rehabilitation Ireland talked about rehabilitating bats. This was very well attended.

Most walks were held during Biodiversity Week, or Heritage Week, and entailed combined walk/talks. Most events included dead specimens, opportunities to hear and see bats as the participants walked around, learning about Irish bats, their ecology, threats, and conservation needs.

During Biodiversity week, three events were held, and two events in Heritage Week. As part of the bats on campus project, static and heterodyne bat surveys were conducted on University of Galway campus between September and November 2023. In addition, the 60 bat boxes were monitored. It was the first year of monitoring, and 4 bats were observed in one of the VWT batboxes; no bats were detected to be roosting in any other boxes but monitoring will continue.

The final activity was held in the University of Galway campus as a initiative between Galway Bat Group, Community and University Sustainability Partnership - Nature and Ecosystems group, and two MSc programmes, with Fresherfest. Almost 100 students attended.

COMMUNITY ENAGAGEMENT

Galway Bat Group

Additionally, Galway Bat Group were very active on the Irish Bat Monitoring Schemes during the monitoring season, as follows:

All Ireland Daubenton's Bat Waterways Survey:

August 2023 - 3 surveys were carried out throughout Galway

Brown Long-eared Roost Monitoring Survey:

June/July/August 2023 - 3 roost counts were carried out at Lydacan, Co. Galway

Car Based Monitoring:

July & August 2023 - Car Transect Survey was carried out in Connemara, Co. Galway

July & August 2023 - Car Transect Survey was carried out in Headford/Tuam, Co. Galway



Bat Walk at Merlin Woods, Co. Galway
August 2023



Bat Walk at Merlin Woods, Co. Galway
August 2023

COMMUNITY ENAGAGEMENT

Kildare Bat Group

Kildare Bat Group had a very busy year and carried out numerous bat walks, events, bot box checks



Events/Bat Walks

- 16.01.2023 - Educational Bat Talk, Bunscoil Bhríde, Rathangan
- 16.01.2023 - Educational Bat Talk, Bunscoil Bhríde, Rathangan
- 30.01.2023 - Educational Bat Talk: Bunscoil Bhríde, Rathangan
- 30.01.2023 - Educational Bat Talk: Bunscoil Bhríde, Rathangan
- 31.01.2023 - Light Surveys: Linear Park, Newbridge. Newbridge Tidy Towns - Day and Night surveys to assess lighting and recommend possible adaptations in the park
- 14.02.2023 - Light Surveys: Kilcock Waterway & surrounds Kilcock Tidy Towns
- 24.02.2023 - Educational Bat Talk: Gaelscoil Mhic Aodha, Kildare town
- 24.02.2023 - Educational Bat Talk: Gaelscoil Mhic Aodha, Kildare town
- 10.03.2023 - Educational Bat Talk: Gaelscoil Mhic Aodha, Kildare town
- 10.03.2023 - Educational Bat Talk: Gaelscoil Mhic Aodha, Kildare town
- 01.04.2024 - Bat ID workshop - Insights into the secret life of bats
- 27.04.2023 - Rossnaree Bat River Walk WRI (Charity Event)
- 13.05.2023 - Linear Park Bat Walk KWR Charity Event
- 20.05.2023 - Bat Walk, St Fintan's Church Mountrath Laois Heritage Office
- 22.05.2023 - Bat Walk, St. Catherine's park Leixlip Leixlip Tidy Towns
- 25.05.2023 - Bat Walk, Leinster Mills, Naas Sallins TT & Sallins
- 27.05.2023 - Bat Walk, The Library, Clara, Co. Offaly
- 12.09.2023 - Bat Walk, Linear Park Newbridge with Newbridge Tidy Towns
- 14.09.2023 - Bat Walk, George's Bridge Edenderr, Co. Offaly
- 19.09.2023 - Castletown House Bat Walk
- 23.09.2023 - Culture Night: Bat Walk Linear Park, Newbridge

COMMUNITY ENAGAGEMENT

Kildare Bat Group

- 14.10.2023 – Kildare Biodiversity Conference Kildare Bat Group Stand
- 14.10.2023 – Kildare Biodiversity Conference Bat Talk
- 14.12.2023 – Bats of Kildare & Ireland – Bird Watch Ireland, Kildare Branch

Bat Box Installation/Monitoring

- 18.02.2023 – Bat Box Monitoring, Newbridge Linear Park with Newbridge Tidy Towns

Roost Counts

- 03.06.2023 – BLE Count Clogaherkinka
- 09.06.2023 – BLE Count Donadea
- 02.07.2023 – BLE Count Clogaherkinka
- 03.07.2023 – BLE Count Donadea
- 07.08.2023 – BLE Count Clogaherkinka
- 08.08.2023 – BLE Count Donadea
- 02.09.2023 – Straffan Lodge Roost Count (dusk) Straffan
- 03.09.2023 – Straffan Lodge Roost Count (dawn) Straffan
- 18.09.2023 – Straffan Lodge Park House (habitat & house) Straffan

All Ireland Daubenton's Bat Surveys

- 4 Sites: Carton House, Meath Bridge Kilcock, Chambers Bridge Kilcock, Pikes Bridge Maynooth
- 1 Site: Jackson Bridge, Maynooth
- 2 Sites: Rathangan
- 1 Site: Clane, Alexander Bridge
- 1 site: Monasterevin, Clogheen Bridge

COMMUNITY ENAGAGEMENT

Kildare Bat Group

Woodland Pilot Scheme

- 10.06.2023 Woodland Pilot Study Donadea Forest Park
- 05.07.2023 Woodland Donadea Forest Park
- 21.08.2023 Woodland Pilot Study Donadea Forest Park

Media

27 May 2023 - RTE Radio 1, Countrywide, Philip Boucher Hayes interview with Anna Collins of Kildare Bat Group

COMMUNITY ENAGAGEMENT

Limerick Bat Group

Biodiversity Week Bat Walks

During Biodiversity week we ran a walk in Dooradoyle Limerick, where we identified an area within the community where bats were active and conducted point and transect surveys.

Artist in the Community

Following on from our work with Artist in the Community Fiona Linnane in 2022 and 2023, Fiona released the music that she produced using calls from a Lesser Horseshoe Bat and words of appreciation for the bat expressed by committee members during a recording session. The music is called Leatherwing, the composer is Fiona Linnane and the music is played by harpsicordist Yonit Kosovske. This was played and discussed on Mooney Goes Wild. <https://nowandthenmedia.bandcamp.com/album/leatherwing>

Limerick Bat Box Project

Following on from our Biodiversity Week walk we identified two further locations and conducted walks and surveys at these locations. We selected trees or structures at all three locations that were suitable for static detectors, placed them out and collected and analysed the data for analysis. We used the data gathered to select suitable locations for bat boxes in the community. We sourced and purchased a number of bat boxes for the project which will be erected in 2024.

Limerick Agricultural Show

We represented Limerick Bat Group and Bat Conservation Ireland at the Limerick Agricultural Show in the Limerick Racecourse. We were based in LCCs Sustainability tent and made lots of new connections with the community. There was a lot of people interested in bats present. It was a long but rewarding day.

COMMUNITY ENAGAGEMENT

Limerick Bat Group

Meadowbrook Community Biodiversity Project

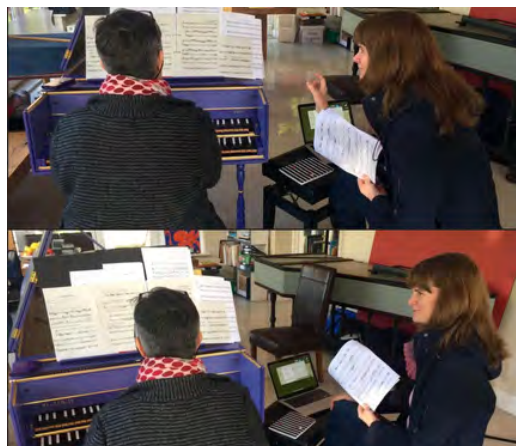
We ran a bat walk and talk in Meadowbrook for approximately 40 interested members of the community. We placed out static bat detectors at a number of locations to gather data for the community group. We provided guidance on how the group can enhance their neighbourhood for bats and then we identified key locations where bat boxes will be beneficial. In 2024 we hope to continue working with this group, erecting bat boxes and providing further walks and talks.

Bats and Folklore walk and talk

We planned a bat walk along the river and a walk with a folklorist on bats and their folklore in Limerick. However the funding authority did not process our application in time and we could not afford to pay the folklorist so we all agreed that we would apply elsewhere to run this walk and talk next year instead as a significant amount of research and planning went into this and it should be a great event.

Other

We posted some videos on our facebook page, shared lots of posts on facebook and promoted bats through our work. We provided support to volunteers taking part in the Daubentons Bat Survey for BCireland and we provided advice and guidance to multiple members of the public who found injured or grounded bats and contacted us on our email by redirecting them to local rehabbers.



COMMUNITY ENAGAGEMENT

Mayo Bat Group

Mayo Bat Group is a relatively small group, but they continue to carry out bat walks and talks, post to social media and run volunteer bat rehabilitation, at a custom designed facility in Co. Mayo, which was built with generously donated funds from bat supporters!



During Biodiversity Week, Mayo Bat Group joined the Friends of Mayo Dark Skies to give a talk and walk in Keenagh, Co. Mayo on 25th May 2023. They met at the Keenagh Loop Trail Head where the talk was given and it focused on the effects that light has on bats and how to use outdoor lighting in a sensitive and more responsible manner. There were 30 attendees booked for the night.



COMMUNITY ENAGAGEMENT

Meath Bat Group

Meath Bat Group are still in the early stages of development and carried out a guided bat walk during Biodiversity Week at Sonairte, Eco Centre and Gardens, Co. Meath.

This walk was fully booked and a great success.

COMMUNITY ENAGAGEMENT

Midland Bat Group

Midland Bat Group carried out a number of activities as follows in 2023:

Bat Walk and Talk, at Tullynally Castle, Co. Westmeath as part of Biodiversity Week.

They also participated in the Irish Bat Monitoring Programme as follows:

All Ireland Daubenton's Waterways Survey

- Inny River, Ballymahon - August 2023
- Abbeyshrule, Co. Longford - August 2023
- Island Bridge, Kenag, Co. Longford - August 2023

Brown Long Eared Survey

- St. Catherine's, Curry, Co. Longford - May, June, August 2023



Midland Bat Group

COMMUNITY ENAGAGEMENT

Wicklow Bat Group

Wicklow Bat Group held one bat walk event in 2023 a Bat Walk at Kilruddery House & Gardens, Bray, Co. Wicklow, as part of Biodiversity Week.

They also participated in the All Ireland Daubenton's Waterways Survey at a number of sites.



COMMUNITY ENAGAGEMENT

Wexford Bat Group

Wexford Bat Group have officially been affiliated with Bat Conservation Ireland for approx. 1 year and have really hit the ground running in 2023. They carried out a number of educational activities throughout the year as follows:

13/4/23 - Talk to Seal Sanctuary Seal Sanctuary, Courtown, Co. Wexford

15/4/23 - CUPHAT tourism event, Rathnure, Co. Wexford

20/5/23 - Talk at Gorey Library, Gorey, Co. Wexford

26/5/23 - Slaney River Walk, Enniscorthy, Co. Wexford

1/6/23 - Castletown National School talk, Castletown, Co. Wexford

23/6/23 - Tintern Abbey bat walk, Tintern Abbey, Co. Wexford

29/6/23 - Tara Hill National School talk, Tara Hill, Co. Wexford

6/7/23 - Static bat detectors, Talbot House, Co. Wexford

7/7/23 - Bioblitz bat walk, Talbot House, Co. Wexford

15/7/23 - New Ross Library bat talk, New Ross, Co. Wexford

11/8/23 - Lavender Farm Bat walk, Kilenerin, Co. Wexford

12/8/23 - WNFC Bat walk, Alan Poole's Farm, Co. Wexford



COMMUNITY ENAGAGEMENT

Wexford Bat Group

Wexford Bat Group also participated in the Irish Bat Monitoring Programme as follows:

All Ireland Daubenton's Waterways Survey

North Slobs, Co. Wexford - August 2023

Glandoran, Co. Wexford - August 2023

Hollyfort, Co. Wexford - August 2023

Brown Long Eared Survey

St. Paul's Clone, Co. Wexford - July & August 2023

Wexford Bat Group also a received third place in the best new group category for the 'Keep Wexford Beautiful' awards, an initiative of Wexford County Council.



Members of Wexford Bat Group, who received 3rd place in the best new group category for the 'Keep Wexford Beautiful Awards'

COMMUNITY ENAGAGEMENT

Tidy Towns

Sponsorship of Special Awards



Bat Conservation Ireland were delighted to be one of the sponsors of Tidy Towns Special Awards 2022.

The purpose of the award was to sponsor a public mural or street artwork that promoted awareness by the public of the economic and ecological value of bats. The theme for the illustration was 'Bats are brilliant!' The award consisted of an artistic commission of €1,000 towards the project.

The competition launched in Spring 2022 and we received very high quality applications, so we decided to award four entries, which would mean there would be four bat murals created around the county. To date 2 murals have been created and we anticipate the final 2 being brought to life during 2024!



Bat Mural in Sneem, Co. Kerry



Bat Mural in Gort, Co. Galway

COMMUNITY ENAGAGEMENT

Citizen Scientist Bat Surveyors

The All-Ireland Bat Monitoring Programme, relies on volunteers to complete surveys, where we train volunteers and give them the skills to carry out surveys on 3 of the 4 schemes managed by Bat Conservation Ireland. Without volunteers, we could not monitor Ireland's bat populations or map their distribution. We are greatly in debt to Irish citizen scientists who gladly give up their time to complete surveys. In any given summer season there can be up to 600 volunteers participating in the numerous schemes we manage. In 2023, 502 volunteers contributed their time and skill to participate in the All Ireland Bat Monitoring Programme, which was an increase of 42 on 2022.



CBM Surveyors

Training is provided for volunteers in a tiered manner, allowing volunteers to participate in schemes according to their level of expertise. Participation in the All Ireland Daubenton's Bat Waterways Survey is the first step for novice volunteers whereby, once completed, each surveyor can identify one species of bat, Daubenton's bat, in flight over waterways. Training consists of an evening lecture followed by field work after dusk.

Once surveyors have expressed an interest in further developing their skills they can participate in training and workshops for other monitoring schemes. Volunteers are also encouraged to join their local bat group to gain further experience. In 2023, training courses were primarily carried out online, which helps the environment and offers more flexibility for those wishing to attend the training.

CONSERVATION

Irish Bat Monitoring Programme

Bat Conservation Ireland's main objective is *the advancement of education and the promotion of the conservation and study of bats on the island of Ireland and elsewhere in the world*. As part of this objective, we monitor Ireland's bats to see how their populations are doing, e.g. are populations increasing, decreasing, or remaining stable. Regular monitoring is the key to picking up any declining (or increasing) trends, which are in turn, important in forming conservation policy and management on a nationwide and EU level. Bat Conservation Ireland manages four monitoring schemes to track trends in bat populations as follows:

1. Car-Based Monitoring;
2. The All-Ireland Daubenton's Bat Waterways Survey;
3. Brown Long-Eared Bat Roost Monitoring;
4. Lesser Horseshoe Bat Roost Monitoring

Car-Based Monitoring

Despite high levels of legal protection for all species, until 2003 there was no systematic monitoring of any species apart from the lesser horseshoe bat in Ireland. To redress this imbalance, The Car-based Bat Monitoring Scheme was first piloted in 2003 and targets the two most abundant pipistrelle species (common and soprano pipistrelles) and Leisler's bat. These species are relatively easy to detect and distinguish from each other on the basis of echolocation calls. The car-based survey makes use of a full spectrum bat detector, which picks up a range of ultrasound that can be recorded in the field and analysed post-survey. This method allows survey work to be carried out by individuals with little or no experience in bat identification since identification is completed post survey work. Nonetheless, all surveyors are fully trained in carrying out the survey method, which can be tricky to implement initially, and are provided with a full set of equipment in order to complete the survey. In this way, results are standardised across the island of Ireland.

CONSERVATION

Summary of the Car Based Monitoring Scheme 2023

For the Car-Based Bat Monitoring Scheme 55 individuals participated in surveys of 27 squares around the island. Online training courses were provided in 2023 for nine new teams, and revision training was provided to two teams, also via Zoom. Data from 53 surveys, all of which had >12 completed transects, were available. In total 14,166 bat passes were recorded, 48% of which were common pipistrelles. The soprano pipistrelle was second most frequently recorded bat species and Leisler's the third most common.

Trends were analysed using a combination of data from both Tranquility (which were used up to 2019) and Batlogger detectors (which were used from 2017 onwards), using a covariate to account for differences in the two. Trends of some species continued to increase in 2023. Confidence intervals of the three target species, common pipistrelle, soprano pipistrelle and Leisler's bats are all well above their baseline indices indicating they each show a significantly increasing trend.

Nathusius' pipistrelle trends are still unclear but decreased a little again in 2023. The brown long-eared roadside trend increased from 2022 although confidence intervals still indicate a reasonably stable trend. Numbers of observations of both these species are extremely low using the car-based method, leading to wide error bars.

The yearly estimate for the *Myotis* spp. group increased in 2023 and the upper confidence intervals moved above the baseline index for the first time in a number of years. This may indicate that the consistent downward trend observed over the past ten or more years has begun to level out.



CONSERVATION

The All-Ireland Daubenton's Bat Waterways Survey

This scheme follows a survey methodology devised by Bat Conservation Trust (BCT UK). Narrow band, heterodyne detectors are used so volunteers who conduct the survey are trained in the identification of Daubenton's bat prior to field work. Surveyors count the number 'bat passes' of this bat species for 4 minutes at each of the ten fixed points on linear waterways. The onset of this scheme was a very significant development in bat monitoring here, since it represented the first large-scale recruitment of members of the Irish public to bat conservation-related work.

Summary of the All-Ireland Daubenton's Bat Waterways Survey 2023

A total of 446 completed surveys from 247 waterway sites were returned to Bat Conservation Ireland in 2023.

Thirty-one waterways sites were located in Northern Ireland and 216 in the Republic of Ireland. Waterway sites surveyed in 2023 were distributed throughout the island with every county on the island of Ireland represented. Two hundred and seventeen surveys were completed in the first survey period in 2023 (Survey 1: 1st - 15th August) while 229 surveys were completed in the second survey period (Survey 2: 16th - 30th August). Of the sites surveyed in 2023 'Sure' Daubenton's bat passes were recorded on 231 waterway sites (93.5%). The number of Daubenton's bat passes recorded in 2023 was slightly lower than for 2022, but still had a greater number of recorded passes than each of the survey years from 2019-2021.

The trend has fluctuated since 2006 but it has been reasonably stable overall, with a slight decline being observed in 2023.



CONSERVATION

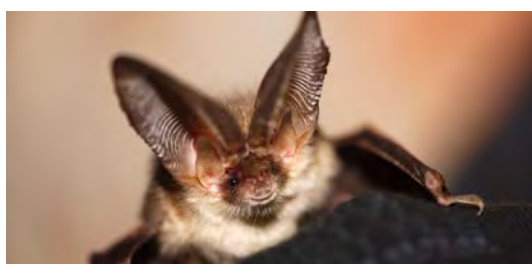
Brown Long-eared Bat Roost Monitoring Scheme

More recently, in 2007, the Brown Long-eared Bat Roost Monitoring Scheme was piloted and established. This project concentrates on counts of brown long-eared bats at their roosts and is conducted by individuals with a greater level of experience in bat identification than is necessary for the waterway surveys or car-based surveys.

The roost survey protocol involves at least two counts per annum (mid-May to August) using three potential survey methods depending on the structure, access and location of bats within, and emerging from, the roost.

Summary of Brown Long-eared Roost Monitoring 2023

For Brown Long-eared Roost Monitoring, 47 volunteers participated in 2023, which included three roost owners. Volunteers provided count data for 29 roost sites while an additional 5 roosts were surveyed by volunteer teams assisting the scheme co-ordinator. In total, 131 monitoring surveys were carried at 47 roosts. Using the highest results for each roost monitored in 2023, the total number of brown long-eared bats counted was 1,735 individuals, the third highest number of individuals counted since the scheme started. Results from a GAM model indicates that there was an increase from 2008 followed by a fluctuating trend above the baseline since 2010. While the index is currently above the baseline value for 2008, there has been a very slight downward trend of the smoothed trend since 2017 or thereabouts. Nonetheless, the error bars encompass the baseline, so the population is, overall, considered to be stable.



CONSERVATION

Lesser Horseshoe Bat Monitoring Programme

In 2013 Bat Conservation Ireland won a contract with NPWS to manage and administer the Lesser Horseshoe Bat Monitoring database (managed by Dr. Niamh Roche). This involves liaising with local National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) and Vincent Wildlife Trust (VWT) staff who conduct counts at lesser horseshoe bat sites in the west of Ireland in summer and in winter. Bat Conservation Ireland gathers the data, ensures it is entered into the database and carries out trend and other analysis on it.

Summary of Lesser Horseshoe Bat Monitoring 2023

NPWS and VWT regional staff forwarded count data from 118 lesser horseshoe bat sites in winter 2023 and 144 sites in summer 2023.

In winter 2023 9,471 bats were counted and over 12,000 bats were counted in summer 2023. From 2012 onwards there has been excellent consistency in counts at lesser horseshoe sites, which improves the robustness of the monitoring dataset. Over the past 20 years this species has increased in winter by an average of 2.8% per annum. Summer trends mirror this, slightly more steeply (3.1% per annum since 2004). Some low counts in winter 2022 pulled the trend line downwards but the higher estimate in 2023 brought the trend line up again.

A high number of new sites have been found by local NPWS staff in the past few years, in 2023 alone, 24 new sites were added to the roost database.



CONSERVATION

Woodland Pilot Monitoring Scheme

In 2023, Bat Conservation Ireland conducted a pilot woodland monitoring scheme, mainly targeting Natterer's bat (*Myotis nattereri*) and Whiskered bat (*Myotis mystacinus*). Ten sites were surveyed during the 2023 pilot. These were located in counties Cavan (four sites), Kildare (one site), Meath (one site), and Wicklow (four sites). The primary objectives of the pilot scheme were to trial the use of two different survey methods, walking transects and static surveillance, to

(i) compare their effectiveness in surveying the woodland species of interest (mainly Natterer's bat and Whiskered bat, but also Brown-long eared bat),

(ii) to compare the statistical power of the two methods in detecting declines in bat activity at amber and red alert levels of decline (25% and 50% decline in activity levels, respectively),

(iii) assess the general feasibility of proceeding with an All-Ireland version of the scheme using either survey method.

We also collected reference echolocation call data across the island for a call library named 'BatClassifyIreland', which is under development.



Natterer's bat hibernating © Paul van Hoof



Whiskered bat hibernating © Paul van Hoof

CONSERVATION

Woodland Pilot Monitoring Scheme

All ten sites across the four participating counties were surveyed by a team of 14 volunteers in 2023. Despite the higher number of recorded files with the static surveillance, power analysis of the data revealed that when it comes to detecting declines in activity of Natterer's bat and Whiskered bat, there is relatively little difference between the two methods. As a result, we have decided to roll out the scheme in more counties in 2024 using the walking transect approach. In addition to being scientifically robust, this is the most cost-effective method and will be easier to coordinate with regard to volunteer participation, data analysis and data management.



Natterer's bat in flight © Paul van Hoof



Whiskered bat in flight © Paul van Hoof

COLLABORATION

Working with Other Groups

Bat Conservation Ireland has long-standing working relationships and collaborations with key groups working across the environmental sector.

Irish Environmental Pillar

Bat Conservation Ireland has been a long-standing member of the Irish Environmental Network (IEN) and has dedicated representative on the Environmental Pillar. Niamh Roche took up the mantle as Bat Conservation Ireland's representative on the Environmental Pillar.

In 2023, the following work was carried out in this capacity:

Meetings Attended:

- Three Pillar meetings and the IEN AGM in November
- A Nature and Biodiversity Actions Budget Meeting
- Citizen's Assembly Biodiversity meeting

Niamh also attended a Linking the Irish Environment meeting in February 2023 and an IEN seminar on '*The Rights of Nature*' in August 2023.

Additionally, Niamh visited Brussels as part of the IEN delegation to the European Commission in October 2023



IEN



**Irish
Environmental
Network**

COLLABORATION

Bat Life Europe



Bat Conservation Ireland is also a member of Bat Life Europe, an international non-governmental conservation organisation, built from a partnership of national bat conservation organisations that are committed to promoting the conservation of all bat species and their habitats throughout Europe. Bat Conservation Ireland has a nominated Trustee to represent Irish interests in this capacity, Donna Mullen. Donna is a former Council member of Bat Conservation Ireland and as an independent bat expert, has extensive experience in this area. She attended virtual monthly meetings as Bat Conservation Ireland's rep in 2023 and hosted talks on various bat topics.

Collaborative work carried out in 2023:

- We collaborated with the RSPB in the production of the UK State of Nature Report & Northern Ireland specific report in 2023. This is a very large collaboration between multiple NGO partners to assess overall biodiversity change in the UK as a whole and the individual countries. We provided our bat trend datasets for Northern Ireland/All Ireland and also contributed to the writing/editing process, as well as promoting the reports on social media in September 2023;
- National Council for the Blind of Ireland – gave a talk on behalf of the Heritage Council, under their ‘Coming to your natural senses’ programme;
- Hedgerows Ireland – we promoted their HedgerowsIreland campaign for better protection for hedgerows on our social media channels;
- We attended two Lesser Horseshoe Bat Species Action Plan steering group meetings. These meetings were hosted by the NPWS and attended by various stakeholders such as VWT, Coillte, OPW, local authorities within the bat’s distribution range.
- We attended a one day seminar at Oxford Island Lough Neagh that was hosted by the British Trust for Ornithology that focussed on encouraging citizen science participation in biodiversity surveys in Northern Ireland.
- We collaborated with VWT throughout the year, on a number of projects, such as reviewing one of their recent research reports and providing feedback as well as providing them with data on counts and sites across the distribution range for Lesser Horseshoe Bats in Ireland when requested.

COLLABORATION

Continued - Collaborative work carried out in 2023:

- In November Bat Conservation Ireland supported a submission by the Irish Wildlife Trust asking the Joint Oireachtas Committee for the Environment consider the Rights of Nature;
- We attended the Rediscovery Centre Ballymun's Let's Talk Science Festival and (wo)manned a Bat Conservation Ireland stand for the day;
- The Heritage Council and National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) provided sponsorship to our 10th Irish Bat Conference;
- National Biodiversity Data Centre - we tutored on one of their biodiversity education workshops (Dalgan Park, Navan). In November 2023 we began the process of handing over a new database download of the National Bat Database so that they can update their bat maps on the mapping portal (this project will be completed in 2024).

COLLABORATION

We have long-term collaborations with the following organisations:

- An Taisce
- Bat Conservation Trust UK
- CEDaR, NI
- Environmental Pillar, IEN
- EUROBATS
- The Heritage Council
- Local Men's Sheds
- National Biodiversity Data Centre (NBDC)
- National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS)
- Northern Ireland Bat Group
- Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA)
- Teagasc
- The Bat Lab, UCD
- Tidy Towns Groups
- Vincent Wildlife Trust



RESEARCH

Nathusius' Pipistrelle Research Group

Nathusius' Pipistrelle Research Group received an NPWS Small Recorders Grant in 2023 to continue with Phase II research into the distribution of this species of bat in County Cavan. Due to poor weather, fewer locations were targeted in 2023 and instead work focussed on the Killeshandra area where Nathusius' pipistrelles have been confirmed to occur in reasonable numbers from previous work.

Cavan Bat Group/Nathusius's Pipistrelle Research Group trapped 12 Nathusius pipistrelles in total, but only two of these were of sufficient weight to be tagged for radiotracking. Radiotracking revealed the presence of two new Nathusius' pipistrelle roosts - one a dwelling house adjacent to the lake and another 5km east of the lake with 5-6 Nathusius' pipistrelles. Four Nathusius' pipistrelles were ringed, bringing to 23 the number of ringed bats in County Cavan. No Nathusius' pipistrelles were found in bat boxes around Killeshandra but the boxes are used by at least three species and two Daubenton's bat maternity roosts.



Photograph of Nathusius's Pipistrelle (under licence held by T. Aughney)

Research Collaboration with UCD

Bat Conservation Ireland has been working in collaboration with Prof. Emma Teeling at the Bat Lab in UCD since 2019, to develop the framework for an Ecosystems Services Research project.

The overall aim is to determine the role that bats play in Ecosystems Services. In other words, what insects do bats consume and how does that help maintain a healthy and diverse environment as well as provide a service for food production, for example as an alternative to controlling pests using pesticides?

A project to examine this topic was awarded funding (2/3 funding) by the Community Foundation for Ireland with project partners the National Biodiversity Data Centre and University College Dublin in late 2020. There were two planned stages to the project in 2021 – one to develop a field guide to Ireland’s bats and the second to set up a website and recruit volunteers to send samples of bat droppings to UCD using a specific protocol and sampling kit.

Analysis of the Bats and Bugs faecal samples was completed in late 2022/early 2023 by the UCD BatLab. All of our surveyors received personal feedback in spring 2023 about the bats and insects that were detected in their samples. James Nolan, the main researcher in UCD’s BatLab who carried out the DNA metabarcoding, presented the initial findings at the 10th Irish Bat Conference in March 2023 and won the ‘Vincent Weir Memorial Prize’ for best student presentation. In order to illustrate the project and some of its results, we commissioned an animation to be created. Following a tendering process WhiteNoise Studios in Belfast were chosen to develop the animation in two parts and this was launched in April 2023 along with results of the study in the Royal Irish Academy in Dawson Street, Dublin. Citizen scientists and project funders were invited to the launch. This event included talks by PhD student Gwen Hurpy as well as James Nolan, followed by a wine reception, and was attended by over 50 people. In addition, James Nolan presented his talk again online via Zoom in May 2023, so Bat Conservation Ireland members and project participants who were unable to attend the in-person event could learn about the results.

Research Collaboration with UCD

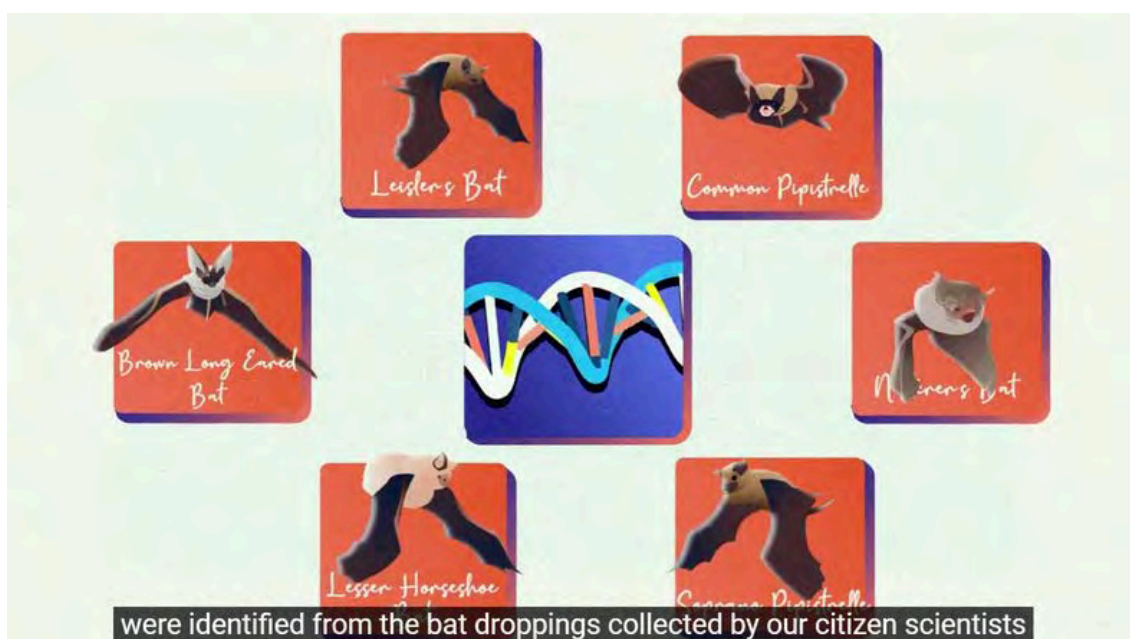
In 2023 we uploaded the animations to YouTube and they are available to view here:

- <https://youtu.be/2P0OTZz1ZbA?si=uJMXUE6Uzissak7E>
- https://youtu.be/atvndsattak?si=c7CmQP_UtavwEVpw

The final elements of this project were completed in the first half of 2023.



Screenshot of Bats and Bugs Animation Video



Screenshot of Bats and Bugs Animation Video

RESEARCH

COST Action Network: Climbats

Climbats is an EU Action Network funded by COST (European Cooperation in Science and Technology) which aims to bring together bat researchers, academics, NGOs and others to examine how climate change affects bat distribution in Europe and how this is likely to impact on the ecosystem services that they provide. Climbats is made up of 3 different working groups, with each group having a main objective as follows:



1. Define, predict and quantify the effects of climate change on bats across Europe (Working Group 1);
2. Establish strategies to develop a network to monitor and predict changes in bat distribution and inform future management and policy (Working Group 2);
3. Evaluate the effects of climate change on insect consumption provided by bats in farmland (Working Group 3).

Bat Conservation is represented on this network by Niamh Roche who joined the Management Committee in 2020. Niamh represented Bat Conservation Ireland on Working Group 2 on Bat Monitoring, having a wealth of experience in running 2 All-Ireland bat monitoring programmes over 18 and 8 years respectively. As part of the action, Bat Conservation Ireland has already contributed over 40,000 Irish bat records and these data, along with thousands of other bat records from across Europe, will enable modelling of bat occurrence and climate.

In 2023, Niamh attended 1 meeting online and attended the final network meeting in Rome in person in April 2023. There was a final launch seminar in June 2023 and a paper was published in the journal *Nature: Scientific Data* - 'A species-level trait dataset of bats in Europe and beyond'.

RESEARCH

Research Papers

Paper Published in the journal *Nature: Scientific Data* (published) - 2023

Title: 'A species-level trait dataset of bats in Europe and beyond'.

Authors: Jérémy S.P. Froidevaux 1,2,3,43, Nia Toshkova 4,5,43, Luc Barbaro 2,6, Ana Benítez-López 7,8, Christian Kerbiriou 2, Isabelle Le Viol 2, Michela Pacifici 9, Luca Santini 9, Clare Stawski 10,11, Danilo Russo 12, Jasja Dekker 13, Antton Alberdi 14, Francisco Amorim 15,16, Leonardo Ancillotto 12, Kévin Barré 2, Yves Bas 2,17, Lisette Cantú-Salazar 18, Dina K. N. Dechmann 19,20, Tiphaine Devaux 2, Katrine Eldegard 21, Sasan Fereidouni 22, Joanna Furmankiewicz 23, Daniela Hamidovic 24,25, Davina L. Hill 26, Carlos Ibáñez 27, Jean-François Julien 2, Javier Juste 27,28, Peter Kaňuch 29, Carmi Korine 30, Alexis Laforge 2, Gaëlle Legras 2, Camille Leroux 2,31, Grzegorz Lesiński 32, Léa Mariton 2,33, Julie Marmet 2, Vanessa A. Mata 15,16, Clare M. Mifsud 34, Victoria Nisteanu 35, Roberto Novella-Fernandez 36, Hugo Rebelo 15,16,37, Niamh Roche 38, Charlotte Roemer 2,17, Ireneusz Ruczyński 39, Rune Sørås 10, Marcel Uhrin 40, Adriana Vella 34, Christian C. Voigt 41 & Orly Razgour 42

ATU - Lesser Horseshoe Bat Research

New PhD student David Smyth, supervised by Allan McDevitt, has begun research into Lesser Horseshoe Bats. Niamh Roche and Tina Aughney met David in November 2023 to discuss his research and offer suggestions and advice for his work.



FUTURE PLANS

Bat Conservation Ireland's plans for 2024 and beyond are as follows:

Organisational Structure

- In 2021, Bat Conservation Ireland developed a new Strategic Plan for the years 2022-2025. Bat Conservation Ireland is committed to start realising the work of this plan in 2024;
- In 2024, we plan to carry out an interim review of our Strategic Plan to get an overview of what we have achieved, what still needs to be achieved and what further resources we may need to put in place to realise this ambitious plan;
- In 2023, Bat Conservation Ireland formally reported to the Charities Regulator on our compliance the Governance Code. In 2023, carried out a 3 year review of some of our governance policies and procedures and will continue this work into 2024, while we continue working on ensuring compliance with the code and our commitment to developing and implementing good governance;
- Following on from the affiliation with Bat Conservation Ireland in 2020, the Bat Groups met compliance by providing reports on their activities in 2023. We will continue to liaise with the bat groups, provide administrative support and advice necessary to help them meet compliance requirements.
- In 2024, we will put out to tender for work to begin on a new organisational database, to help us manage and process data in a more streamlined way and support our staff in managing their projects.

Conservation Work

- As we won the tender for monitoring for Irish Bat Monitoring Programme (2022-2027), we intend to meet the requirements of this tender through the 5 year period;
- Continue to develop materials and resources for the online training platform to provide training on bat surveying and different aspects of conservation to fill a gap in training provision and free up resources currently carrying out in-person training;
- Evaluate our our small grants scheme and relaunch it in 2024 using reserve monies, to support the work of small, volunteer and community-led conservation work around the country;

FUTURE PLANS

- Develop our work on monitoring schemes and roll out an expanded Woodland Bat Monitoring pilot scheme in 2024 to encompass additional counties;
- Bat Conservation Ireland will continue its work of educating the general public about the importance of bats for a healthy environment in the following ways:
 - Continue to deal with queries submitted through our website - consider ;
 - By maintaining and updating our 2 websites - www.batconservationireland.org and www.learnaboutbats.org;
 - Updating our main website www.batconservationireland.org to ensure it is user friendly and provides current and relevant information;
 - Conduct bat walks and talks, centrally through Bat Conservation Ireland staff and through the county bat groups around the country;
 - Carry out training (either in person or online) for members, the general public, ecologists, NPWS staff, students, bat rehabbers and anyone with an interest in learning more about bats, or in upskilling people in specific areas;
 - Carry out educational activities during Biodiversity Week and Heritage Week for the general public;
 - Maintain and update our social media platforms, consider new social media platforms such as LinkedIn and TikTok, to help engage and educate the general public about bats;
 - Train a panel of educators across the island who can run bat walks and talks when staff and Bat Groups do not have capacity.

Community Engagement

- Provide support for bat groups for their work in running bat walks and talks and educational events and conservation projects in their local communities;
- Carry out a pilot project 'Gardening for Bats', which aims to improve gardens as bat habitats, particularly in urban and peri-urban areas, by engaging with garden centres and plant suppliers through an educational and awareness campaign;
- We intend supporting another 2 Tidy Towns Special Awards in 2024, to help reach different audiences and educate them on bats and bat conservation, using the medium of art to communicate this message;
- Help support Tidy Towns on projects such as our bat box scheme, to ensure there is wide coverage of these conservation projects;

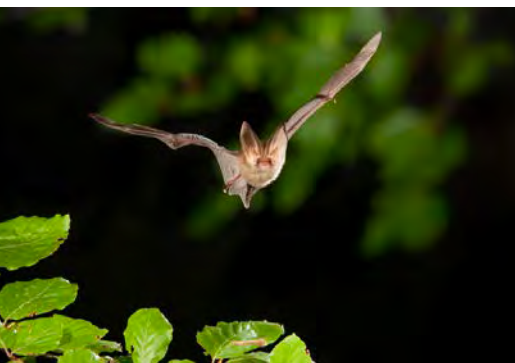
FUTURE PLANS

Collaboration

- Continue engaging with the Environmental Pillar, to ensure that bat issues are well represented at national level;
- Continue to work with Bat Life Europe and Eurobats through our representative appointed, to ensure that issues around Irish bats are well represented at European Level;
- Continue working with national environmental organisations around the country to ensure that bat issues receive good exposure;

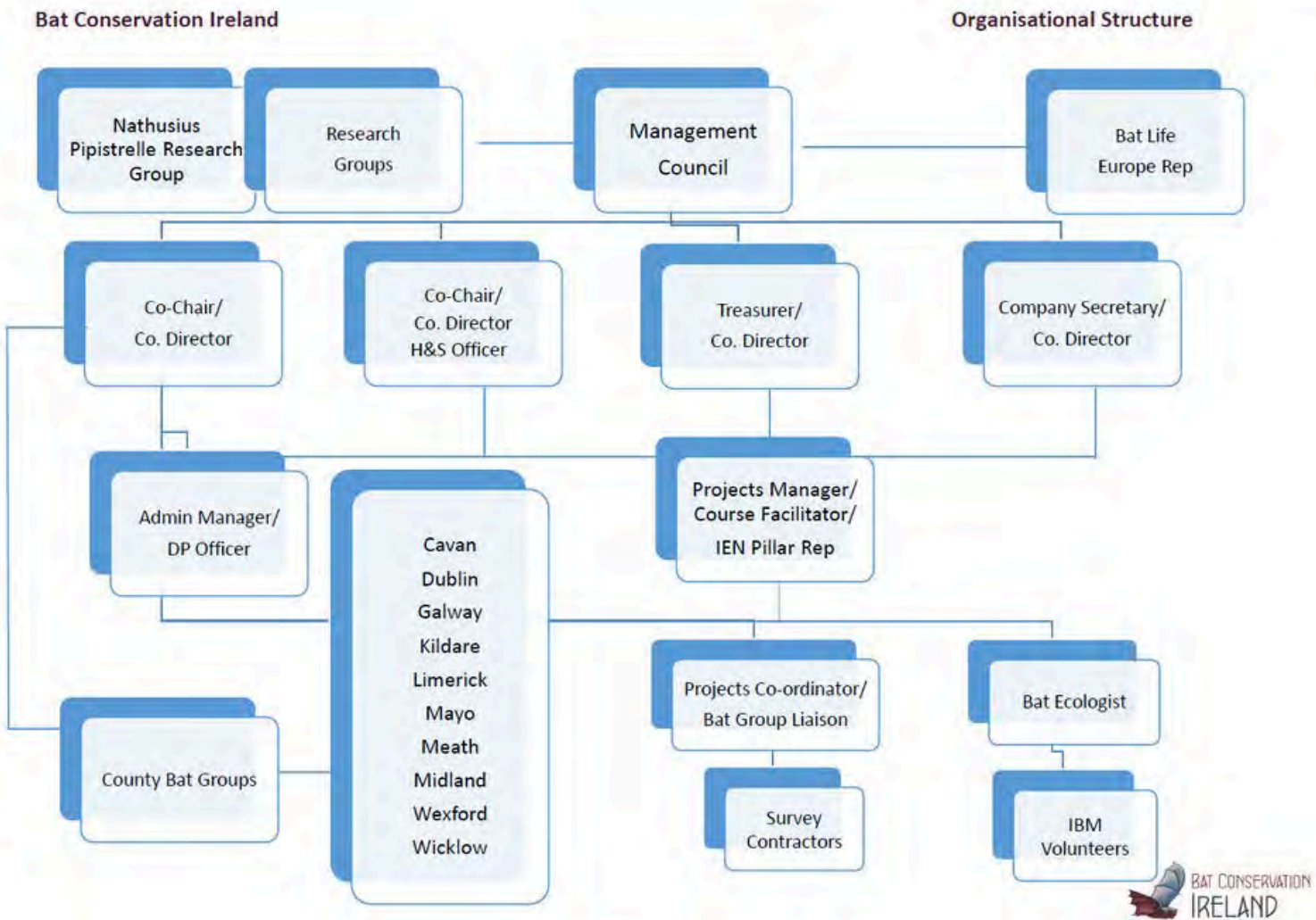
Data Research

- Ensure that data is uploaded to our database housing bat records to ensure it is accurate and up to date;
- Liaise with NBDC around housing of bat records and feed data into their database repositories;
- Continue participating in research collaborations and if the COST Action Network: Climbats receives new funding to continue their work, we will collaborate with them
- Continue participating in research collaborations such as UCD's Batlab and any future work on Ecosystems Services and bat research;
- Continue with researchers and contributing to research publications.



ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE

Bat Conservation Ireland is a non-governmental organisation with charitable status. We are a membership organisation, with a governing Council (Comprised of 9 Council members in 2023) and a small, paid part-time staff. We have 10 bat groups at various stages of development, around the country. Our current organisational structure is laid out in the matrix below.



STAFF

Bat Conservation Ireland had 5 paid part-time staff members in 2023.

Tina Aughney

Tina has managed the All-Ireland Daubenton's Waterways Survey since 2006 and the Brown Long-eared Bat Monitoring Scheme since 2007. She works for Bat Conservation Ireland on a part time basis.



Under Tina's management, the All-Ireland Daubenton's Waterways Survey has developed into a monitoring scheme with a large and committed volunteer base. By liaising on a county level with local authorities and community groups, promoting the project with local press and radio stations, and presenting training courses throughout the island, Tina has trained in excess of 2,000 volunteers since 2006. This scheme continues to thrive with over 400 waterway sites surveyed across the island providing extensive information on the distribution of this species.

Tina has an honours degree in Environmental Science from NUI Galway and completed a Ph.D. thesis on the impact of the Rural Environmental Protection Scheme (REPS) on lowland farm habitats in the west of Ireland. For her extensive work in relation to bats and facilitating members of the public to become actively involved in the conservation of Irish bat species, Tina was awarded Distinguished Recorder of the Year 2011 by the National Biodiversity Data Centre.

She is an active active collector of biodiversity data that is regularly submitted to National Biodiversity Data Centre (NBDC).

STAFF

David Clarke

David joined Bat Conservation Ireland in May 2023 as a Bat Ecologist. He has over ten years' experience working in environmental education and conducting research in a range of ecological fields.



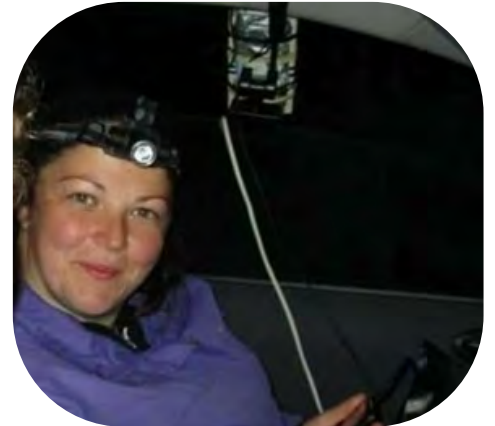
David became interested in bats while working and living in New Zealand. During this time, he initiated and coordinated two research projects examining the presence and distribution of long-tailed bats in the wider Auckland region, a species classed as 'Nationally Critical' and needing urgent conservation action to protect remaining populations. Both projects involved active collaboration with communities, ecological consultancies, local and regional authorities, and universities.

David has an honours degree in Environmental Science from the University of Galway, and a Ph.D. in Acarology, also from the University of Galway.

STAFF

Karen Healy

Karen joined Bat Conservation Ireland in November 2023 as Projects Co-ordinator. Karen has over seventeen years' experience working in the community and environment sector in Northern Ireland.



Karen has over seventeen years' experience working in the community and environment sector in Northern Ireland. As Environmental Officer at Creggan Country Park, Karen worked with a wide range of groups through the environmental volunteer programme, nature themed events, community fridge, tree nursery and environmental education programme.

Karen has been an active volunteer committee member of the Northern Ireland Bat Group since 2007 and served as Chairperson from 2015 - 2022. In both roles she has helped recruit and train new volunteers, created an education resource, organised member meet ups, and volunteer events. Karen is a licenced roost visitor (NIEA) and registered bat carer (Bat Conservation Trust). She has volunteered in the Irish Bat Monitoring Programme (Car-Based Bat Monitoring and All Ireland Daubenton's Bat Waterway Survey) and completes a Roost Count and Hibernation Survey each year for Bat Conservation Trust's NBMP.

Karen has a degree in Environmental Science and MSc in Environmental Management from Ulster University and has a TQUK qualification in Education and Training and ILM qualification in Volunteer Management and Mentoring.

STAFF

Dawn Quinn

Dawn joined Bat Conversation Ireland in 2019 as its part-time Administration Manager. She has over 20 years' administrative and financial experience, working in both the private and NGO sectors.



Dawn has worked in variety of different roles including managing and implementing administrative systems, volunteer management, project and network coordination and event management in the human rights, social justice and international development sectors.

She holds an honours degree in Audio Visual Communications from the Institute of Technology Tallaght and a Master's Degree in Comparative Ethnic Conflict from Queen's University Belfast

STAFF

Niamh Roche

Niamh has managed the Car-based Bat Monitoring Scheme since 2004 and the Lesser Horseshoe Bat Roost Monitoring Scheme since 2012. She works for Bat Conservation Ireland on a part time basis.



Under her direction, the car-based scheme has grown from a pilot project covering fewer than 10 survey squares, to an island-wide survey with a committed surveyor base. She has also presented Bat Conservation Ireland's work at national and international conferences. She was lead author of the book *Irish Bats in the 21st Century*. Niamh has also been the main organiser of several national bat conferences. More recently Niamh has been involved in analysing long-term bat trend datasets collected by Bat Conservation Ireland monitoring schemes to see if predictions can be made about how they are likely to change with future climate change.

Niamh represents Bat Conservation Ireland on the Management Committee of the EU Cost Network Project on Bats and Climate Change. Niamh also represents Bat Conservation Ireland on the Environmental Pillar.

She has a degree in Environmental Biology from UCD and a Ph.D. from the University of Warwick, which examined bat activity in broadleaved woodlands

VOLUNTEERS

In any given year, Bat Conservation Ireland could have 600 volunteers helping us achieve our goal of 'the advancement of education and the promotion of the conservation and study of bats on the island of Ireland and elsewhere in the world'.

Our volunteers are critical to our work and we could not achieve our goals without them. Volunteers work across key areas as follows:

- Education - conducting bat walks and talks around the country, as well as carrying out conservation project on a local level
- Bat Monitoring - carrying out bat surveys for the Car-based Monitoring Scheme, the All Ireland Daubenton's Waterways Survey and the Brown Long-Eared Bat Roost Monitoring and more recently the Woodland Pilot Monitoring Project
- Community Engagement - Liaising with other Community groups such as Tidy Towns and Men's Shed for our Bat Box scheme



Irish Bat Monitoring Programme Video 2 Waterways Survey



MEMBERSHIP

Bat Conservation Ireland is a membership organisation that greatly values its members and volunteers, both of whom are vital to the work of conserving Ireland's bat populations. Many of our members participate in activities such as our national monitoring programmes, which are carried out annually.

We would like to sincerely thank all of our members and volunteers for their kind and generous support in 2023.

Volunteers with Bat Conservation Ireland play a key role in supporting the work of the bat monitoring projects carried out annually. In 2023, there were 272 paid members of Bat Conservation Ireland. As we are very active around the country in any given year, carrying out bat walks and talks, participating in events and educational activities, this helps with encouraging new members to join. In 2023, we were able to provide a range of activities and volunteering opportunities for members to engage in.

In order to ensure that membership fees are processed in an efficient manner and decrease staff dealing with cash and cheque payments, we have an online recurring membership payments system which allows annual membership fees to be automatically renewed, thereby decreasing the amount of administrative time spent on following up on payments.

**Bat Conservation Ireland
would like to thank all of our
members and volunteers for
their invaluable support.**

Financial Summary

Income

Irish Bat Monitoring Programme (NPWS & NIEA)	103,931
Woodland Pilot Monitoring Scheme	54,705
Core Funding (IEN – Dept. of the Environment, Climate & Communications)	43,442
IEN – Biodiversity Week	3,700
Membership and Donations	6,962
Sales of Merchandise, Irish Bat Conference Registrations and Training Courses	38,559
Heritage Council	13,470
Bat Group Projects	7,396
Other Funding (IEN)	3,062
Project Monies Deferred	-
UCD-NPWS Research Project	-

275,227

Expenditure

Irish Bat Monitoring Programme	20,975
BCIreland Grants	-
Woodland Pilot Monitoring Scheme	26,339
Once-off Projects	13,666
Bat Group Projects	1,182
Ecosystems Services Project	8,830
IEN Biodiversity Week 2023	300
IEN Other Funding	150
BCIreland Workshops/Courses/Walks	17,930

Core Costs

Wages and Salaries	115,525
Social Welfare Costs	12,895
Staff Define Contribution Pension Costs	3,970
Staff Training	512
Management Expenses	889
Insurance	6,912
Printing, Postage & Stationery	726
Computer Costs	7,666
Motor Expenses	303
Legal & Professional Consultancy	652
Bank Charges	410
Bad Debts	1,225
Staff Welfare	436
General Expenses	2,213
Subscriptions	250
Auditor's Remuneration	5,056
Depreciation	608
Charitable Donations	-

249,620

25,607

Net Surplus*

*Net Surplus funds will form part of our reserve funds, intended to be used to fund BCIreland Small Grants Scheme and longer-term conservation projects
2023 Annual Report and Financial Statements were properly prepared in accordance with FRS 102 "The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland"

IN 2023

National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage

Purpose: Irish Bat Monitoring Programme
Contract Term: 5 years (2022-2027)
Total Value of Contract: €536,866

Community Foundation for Ireland - Environment and Nature Fund

Purpose: Ecosystems Services Project
Grant Term: Carried over into 2023
Total Value of Funding: €46,446

Irish Environmental Network - IEN, on behalf of Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment

Purpose: Core Funding
Grant Term: 2023-2024
Total Value of Funding: €43,442

Northern Ireland Environmental Agency (Natural Environmental Division) Bat Monitoring in Northern Ireland (Irish Bat Monitoring Programme)

Purpose: National Bat Distribution Project
Grant Term: 2022-2023
Total Value of Funding: €9,543

National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage

Purpose: Woodland Monitoring Pilot Scheme
Funding Term: 2023 - 2024
Total Value of Funding: €20,000

IN 2023

The Heritage Council, Capacity Building Fund

Purpose: Build an Online Training Platform

Grant Term: 2023

Total Value of Funding: €13,470

Cavan County Council

Purpose: Woodland Monitoring Pilot Scheme

Funding Term: 2023

Total Value of Contract: €10,000

Kildare County Council

Purpose: Woodland Monitoring Pilot Scheme

Funding Term: 2023

Total Value of Contract: €8,235

Meath County Council

Purpose: Woodland Monitoring Pilot Scheme

Funding Term: 2023

Total Value of Contract: €8,235

Wicklow County Council

Purpose: Woodland Monitoring Pilot Scheme

Funding Term: 2023

Total Value of Contract: €8,235

National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage

Purpose: An investigation into the distribution of Nathusius' pipistrelle on lakes in County Cavan. Phase 2.

Grant Term: 2023

Total Value of Funding: €4,151

National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage

Purpose: To collect and input bat data to the bat records database

Grant Term: 2023

Total Value of Funding: €4,085



An Roinn Tithíochta,
Rialtais Áitiúil agus Oidhreachta
Department of Housing,
Local Government and Heritage



Northern Ireland
Environment
Agency



Department of
**Agriculture, Environment
and Rural Affairs**
www.daera-ni.gov.uk

IEN



**Irish
Environmental
Network**

An Chomhairle Oidhreachta
The Heritage Council



**Bat Conservation
Ireland would like to
thank our partners and
funders for their
financial assistance**

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Registered Number: 494343
Charity Number: 13016
Charity Registration Number: 20039417

