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The Leisler's bat *(Nyctalus leisleri)* in the Republic of Ireland – a review

By KATE MCANEY, Galway

Summary

In summary, the Leisler's bat is believed to be widespread and common in the Republic of Ireland: However a systematic nationwide monitoring programme is needed to determine the true status of this species. Most nursery roosts are in occupied buildings where they often give rise to problems for the householders. Probably the greatest threat facing this species is disturbance at summer roost sites.

Little is known about tree or hibernation roosts. Recent research has led to a greater understanding of the diet and foraging behaviour of this species and raised some questions on related conservation issues.

Zusammenfassung

Der Kleinabendsegler *(Nyctalus leisleri)* in Irland – ein Rückblick

Der Kleinabendsegler, so glaubt man, ist in der Republik Irland weit verbreitet: Dennoch ist ein systematisches und für das ganze Land umfassendes Monitoring nötig, um den wahren Status dieser Art zu bestimmen. Viele Wochenstuben befinden sich in bewohnten Häusern, wo sie oft ein Problem für die Hausbesitzer darstellen. Möglicherweise ist die größte Bedrohung dieser Art das Stören der Menschen während der Sommerquartiere.

Nur wenig ist bekannt über die Baum- und Winterquartiere. Neueste Forschungsergebnisse führten zu einem besseren Verständnis des Freß- und Nahrungssuchverhaltens dieser Art und steigerten das Interesse bezüglich des Schutzes des Kleinabendseglers.

Résumé

La Noctule de Leisler *(Nyctalus leisleri)* en Irlande – une rétrospective

On dirait que la Noctule de Leisler se trouve partout dans la République d'Irlande. Cependant, un programme de surveillance systématique sur le plan national est exigé pour déterminer le vrai statut de cette espèce. Bien des colonies de reproduction se trouvent en maisons occupées où elles créent souvent des ennuis aux propriétaires. Peut-être, la plus grande menace pour cette espèce provient de perturbation humaine aux gîtes d'été.

Peu est connu en ce qui concerne les gîtes d'arbre et d'hibernation. Les derniers résultats de recherche ont mené à mieux comprendre le comportement de chasse et d'alimentation de cette espèce, tout en soulevant des problèmes y relatifs.

Introduction

Information on the Leisler's bat in the Republic of Ireland comes from the following sources: the National Parks and Wildlife National Bat Survey of 1985-88; the 1999 Bats in Houses report by the Bat Conservation Group Dublin; published research and occasional roost records collected by the author. The National Parks and Wildlife is the government body responsible for bat conservation and protection. Information from this department dates back to a nationwide survey of buildings, which was undertaken during the years 1985-1988. During that time, 71 summer roosts were found, 58 containing less than 50 bats and just 13 containing more than 50 bats. Roosts were found in buildings of all ages, mostly inhabited houses, but also in churches, schools and commercial properties. Since this survey, a number of the larger roosting sites have been lost, in at least one case (involving 250 bats) because the householder deliberately blocked up the access point used by the bats before they returned one summer. Also, a roost estimated to contain between 800-1000 bats discovered during that survey now contains approx. 100 animals.

Problems

As there is no database for bat records collected in the Republic of Ireland, reports of roosts used by the Leisler's bat are scattered. Winter and tree roosts are rarely recorded. Twenty-four Leisler's bats have been found to date in Schwegler bat boxes erected by The Vincent Wildlife Trust in March 1999. The voluntary Bat Conservation Group Dublin spends much of its time with problems, either real or perceived, from householders who have these animals in their attics. Householders have problems with this species on the basis of noise, fear and droppings (which give rise to a smell and staining). Also, they worry about the attitude of their neighbours and they

fear that they will be unable to carry out repair work during the summer if they have bats.

Protection

In a joint project between the National Parks and Wildlife North-western Region and The Vincent Wildlife Trust modifications were made to a roof space of an inhabited house that was used by a large colony of Leisler's bats. The bats were causing problems of smell, staining and noise. A purpose-built bat box was installed within the roof in spring 1997. In June of that year, 145 bats were counted emerging and the colony appears to have accepted the new roosting conditions. Confining the bats to the box, which is cleared out every autumn once the colony leaves, has solved the problems described earlier.

The Leisler's bat has been the subject of research in the Republic since the late 1980's, with papers published on emergence, foraging and roosting behaviour and diet by McAney & Fairly, Shiel & Fairly and Shiel et al.

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Author's address:

Kate McAney, The Vincent Wildlife Trust, Donaghpatrick, Headford, Co. Galway, Republic of Ireland

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Autor(en)/Author(s): McAney Kate

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