

Dispelling Myths About Ireland's Most Misunderstood Mammal

County Clare, IRELAND, 23rd Aug 07

Clare's most misunderstood mammal will feature prominently during the inaugural Clare Heritage Week, which gets underway tomorrow Saturday 25th August. A series of guided tours focusing on the county's significant bat population will take place at Dromoland, Mountshannon and Ennis.

On Tuesday 28th Anny Wise of the Clare Association of An Taisce will present 'Sea of Bats', a lecture on native bats. A bat walk in Dromoland Castle Grounds will follow the lecture at 5pm.

On Wednesday 29th, Sinead Biggane of the National Parks and Wildlife Service will host a bat talk in Mountshannon. The event, which commences at 8.30pm, will allow members of the public to discover the bats around the East Clare village and take part in a guided walk around the local harbour.

On Thursday 30th, David Lyons of the Clare Bat Group will host a bat walk in Ennis at 8.30pm. Those in attendance will be able to learn about the bats that fly around the River Fergus, and hear and see the mammals in flight.

Each of the events are free of charge while anyone interested in attending is asked to bring a torch, as well as suitable clothing and footwear for the outdoors. Anyone with a bat detector is invited to bring the device to the events.

Elaine Keegan, Database Manager, Clare County Council explained, "*August is a good time of the year to see bats out at night. The young are now becoming independent of their mothers and are feeding vigorously in order to build up sufficient body fat to see them through their winter hibernation. It is, therefore, appropriate that the upcoming series of talks coincide with the end of this weaning period.*"

Ms. Keegan added that one of the main objectives of the upcoming public events would be to expose the highly complex lives of bats and to dispel the myths that exist about them.

"Few people know that bats have good eyesight and highly developed hearing, using sonar to make their way at night. Bat detectors have also been developed to make the ultrasound audible to humans and have helped to distinguish different bats in flight", stated Ms. Keegan.

Meanwhile, Clare remains one of the most active counties in Ireland in terms of raising awareness of the tiny mammal. Last year, the Clare Biodiversity Office and National Parks and Wildlife Service jointly established the Clare Bat Group.

According to Elaine Keegan, *"The setting up of such a group was a natural response to the county's growing status as one of Europe's most important centre for bat populations. Nine of the ten species of bats in Ireland are found breeding in Clare while the Daubenton's bats, which are endangered in parts of Europe, are still considered relatively common in the county."*

Meanwhile, over fifty events are scheduled to take place around Clare during Heritage Week 2007. Clare County Council has confirmed that the events will include a range of talks, field trips and exhibitions aimed at encouraging people to take an interest in their local heritage.

Heritage Week is part of European Heritage Days, a joint initiative of the Council of Europe and the European Union. Locally the event is co-ordinated by Clare County Council and the Heritage Council with support from the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government.

Further information and an events listing for Clare is available on

www.heritageweek.ie

or

http://www.clarecoco.ie/news/Heritage_Week_07.html

Bat Conservation Ireland

<http://www.batconservationireland.org/>

Bat Records

<http://www.batconservationireland.org/php/data.php>

National Parks and Wildlife Service

www.npws.ie

Irish Wildlife Trust

<http://www.iwt.ie/>

biology.ie

<http://www.biology.ie>

Environmental Protection Agency

<http://www.epa.ie/>

aNSwer

<http://www.answer-online.org/>

Platform for Biodiversity Research

<http://www.biodiversityresearch.ie/>