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HELVE^{IA}

Magazine for Members of the Swiss Society of New Zealand Inc

FAUNA IN SWITZERLAND

Greater mouse-eared bat

The greater mouse-eared bat, *Myotis myotis*, is the most common European species of bat. It is relatively large for a member of the *Myotis* genus, weighing up to 45 grams - a little larger than a house mouse, making it one of the largest European bats.

The body of the greater mouse-eared bat resembles the body of a mouse and is covered in woolly hair. As bats don't fly in daylight, their eyes are small. They rely on their hearing much more than on vision.

Like its relatives the greater mouse-eared bat eats various arthropods; however, unlike many bats it does not capture prey by echolocation in flight but instead gleans it from the ground, locating the prey passively - listening for the noises produced by creatures such as carabid beetles, centipedes and spiders. Thus, it uses echolocation only for spatial orientation, even if it emits ultrasound calls when approaching prey. The frequencies used by this bat species for echolocation lie between 22 and 86 kHz.

A greater mouse-eared bat can eat up to half its body weight in one night - and by doing so contributes to pest control.

They rest and sleep during the day head down, holding fast with their strong claws. Their favourite places are crevices in beams, caves, and hollow trees from where they hang,

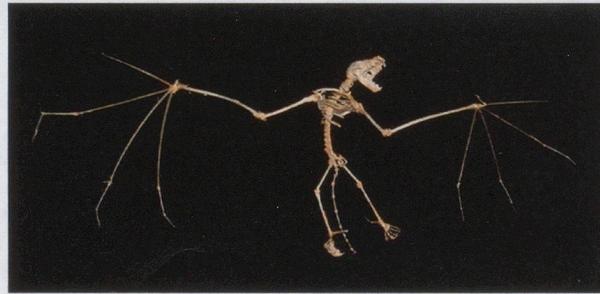
In summer, nursery roosts in northern Europe are located almost exclusively in large attics of buildings, such as churches, while in southern Europe they are located in caves. Solitary males can also roost there. In autumn, greater mouse-eared bats migrate over hundreds of kilometres to special hibernating places in underground roosts, like caves, mines, forts, tunnels and large cellars. Their body temperature sinks to the surrounding temperature, and breathing is very slow. They use up all their body fat, and if the winter is too long or too cold, many bats don't wake up in spring.

From 1977 to 2006, a total of 831 cases of bat rabies were detected in Europe. The transmission of bat rabies to terrestrial mammals is rare.

The first spill over to wildlife species was confirmed in 2001 when in Germany a stone marten was tested positive. Sporadic human rabies cases following a bat bite have been described. A Swiss biologist who had multiple bat bites died in Finland in 1985.



The greater mouse-eared bat



A skeleton of a greater mouse-eared bat