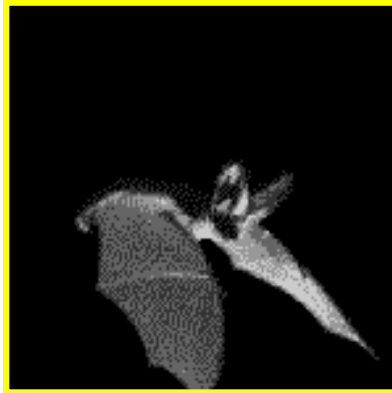


# **THE BAT FAUNA OF BELCAMP, FINGAL, COUNTY DUBLIN**

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A survey undertaken in September 2005 for Fingal County Council

The Belcamp site was visited by Colum Fitzgerald on September 20<sup>th</sup>, 2005. The assessment of the site for bats entailed repeated traversing of the site from sunset until 10.00 pm with the aid of a Batbox Duet heterodyne and frequency division bat detector. This detector was connected to a Sony Minidisc NH600 recorder by a cable and all of the examination was recorded onto a Minidisc. This recording was then analysed by Brian Keeley using “Batsound” sound analysis software to confirm the identity of all bats encountered.

The period during which bats were active was particularly short and this may have interfered with the assemblage of species that would typically occur within the site. Only one species of bat was encountered during this assessment: the soprano pipistrelle (see Figure 1: *Pipistrellus pygmaeus*). Bats were noted flying in and out of a cow shed to the west of Belcamp Hall from 7.56 pm to 8.10 pm. This accounted for all of the bat activity on this night. This is almost certainly due to the cold weather that ensued on the remainder of the night. Temperatures plummeted quickly on this night and bat activity was suppressed throughout Fingal.

The sound analysis determination of the species present as soprano pipistrelle was consistent with the observation in the field that the bats noted emitted their calls at a peak frequency of 55 kHz. This would be a diagnostic signal for this species.

Observations in Barberstown, Clonsilla on the same night yielded a decline in bat activity but not as severe as at Belcamp. Fog descended bringing near-freezing conditions at Belcamp.

It would be expected that this site would offer more bat roosting and feeding potential than was noted in September 2005. In comparison to observations made in the townlands around here, the bat fauna is depauperate. This shall be addressed in a moment. Discussions with security staff resident on site indicate that bats roost within the house at the chapel and that bats are noted emerging from the eaves of the house throughout the summer.

Clearly, this house is a bat roost and this may be a summer roost for the soprano pipistrelles observed in this assessment or it is possible that another bat species is present within the house. The three most likely species to occur within houses are the soprano pipistrelle, the common pipistrelle and the Leisler's bat.

To the east of Belcamp, a Leisler's bat was found hibernating in the former Atkins offices close to Campion's bar (south of Balgriffin House) in or around 2000.

To the north of here, St. Doulagh's church is a long-established brown long-eared bat roost. The caretaker, Mrs. Margaret Kinsman, reported the presence of these bats to Dublin Bat Group as far back as 1990. An examination of this church in 1996 also provided information that Leisler's bats feed here at night.

This species was also noted at Abbeyville in Kinsealey. Abbeyville is host to a number of bat species including soprano and common pipistrelle, brown long-eared bat, Daubenton's bat and whiskered/Brandt's bat. It would then be possible that up to six species of bat could be present in the grounds of Belcamp, either roosting or feeding here.

The presence of two large bodies of water would clearly create suitable feeding conditions for bats and the presence of the buildings would enhance the site for roosting bats.

It is unlikely that the observations made in this study are representative of the totality of bat activity at Belcamp. The survey was hampered by the change in weather conditions and the late date of survey was a consequence of delays in access to the site.

### **Significance of the Belcamp site for bats of Fingal**

It is difficult to draw conclusions on the bat fauna of Belcamp based on this visit due to the weather conditions that suppressed bat activity. Additionally, this site is best evaluated at an earlier date in the summer as the buildings themselves are very high potential as bat roosts (in particular, maternity roosts). The report of the presence of one such roost in the house near the chapel lends credence to this suggestion.

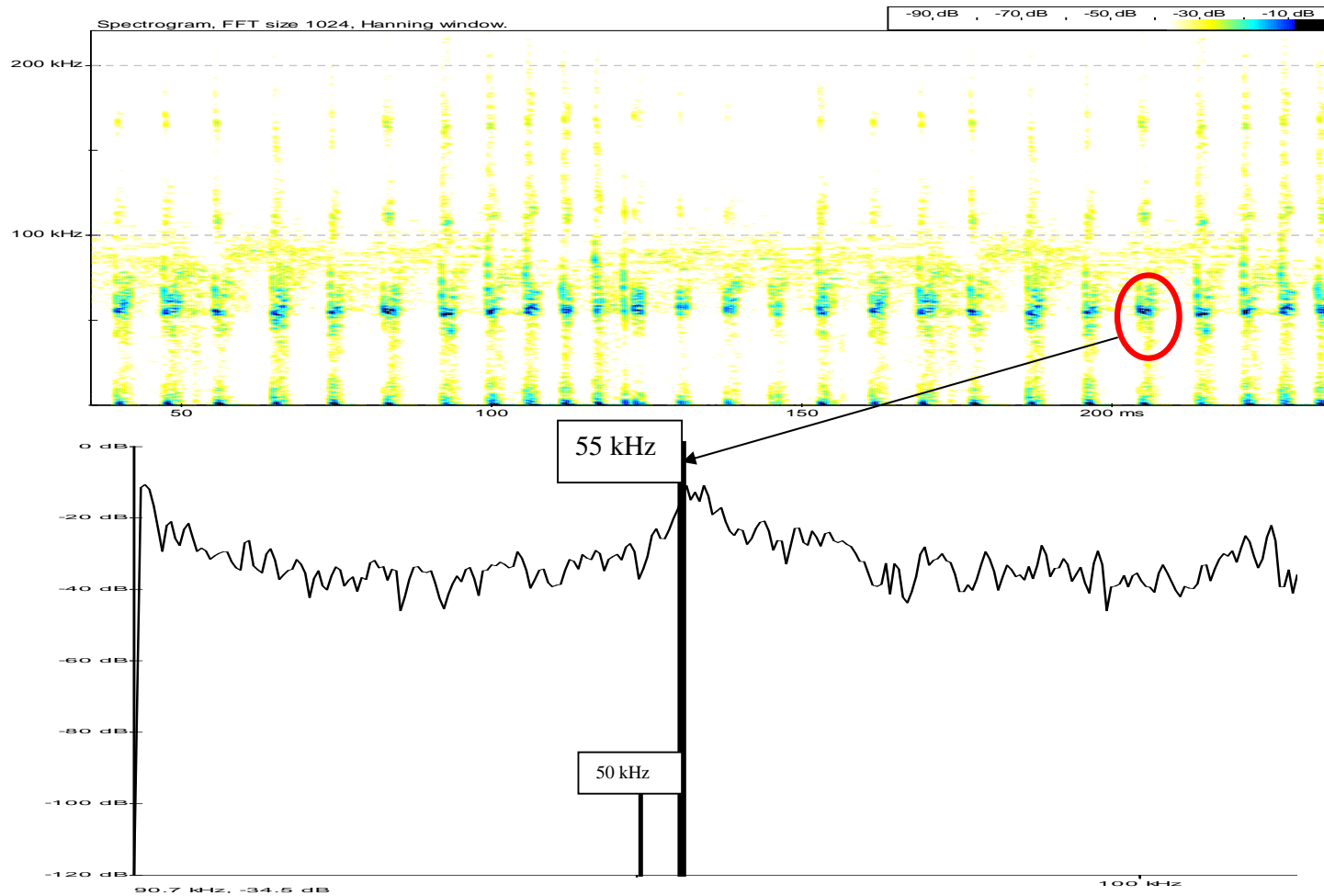
As has been indicated in the text, there are a variety of bat species in close proximity to Belcamp. In many ways, Belcamp is an area that will be and is under enormous pressure in terms of the vegetation and fauna. Bats are facing continued reduction in suitable feeding sites as north Dublin becomes more developed, with the arrival of the M1, shopping centres, houses, hotels and golf courses.

### **Monitoring of the bat fauna at Belcamp**

There is a distinct difficulty in monitoring the bat fauna at Belcamp as it is in private hands and it is scheduled for re-development. Nevertheless, bat species are all legally protected against death or injury from construction where this could be foreseen and it is a responsibility of the owners that all buildings are examined for bats to ensure that measures to protect bats are implemented during any demolition or renovation.

The buildings should be assessed for the presence of bats by a suitably trained individual and proposals to protect the bat fauna should be provided by him/ her.

Clearly, it would be beneficial in terms of appreciating the bat fauna of this site, if a summer assessment were undertaken (June/ July being a key period for assessment). This would be dependent upon the owners of the site and it is possible that access would be difficult to secure.



**Figure 1: Frequency division analysis of bat signals from Belcamp.**

The lower graph shows the peak frequency of the signal of the bats observed and recorded. All signals on the disc were the same throughout.