



# Voluntary helpline provides important data on bats in Slovenia



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## Introduction

SDPVN - Slovenian Association for Bat Research and Conservation is a non-governmental organisation. Since its establishment in 1998, its members have been advising, assisting and educating the general public about issues concerning bats and their roosts.



Foto: Simon Štefko Falk

In 2009, we started systematically recording data related to public enquiries (phone calls, e-mails, personal contacts, contacts made through social networking service) received from all over the country. Approximately 10 members allowed their personal phone numbers to be listed on the home page, so as to provide urgent assistance to people who finding a bat or bat roost.

All the work is done on a voluntary basis and so far SDPVN mainly did not receive (except in 2009) any funding to operate and administrate the bat helpline and care network.



Foto: Simon Zidar

## Results

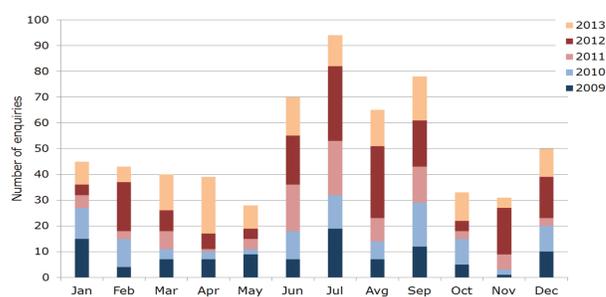
Data collected through the activities of the helpline between 1 January 2009 and 31 December 2013 (5 years) in Slovenia have been analysed. Data analyzed in this paper differ slightly from the data already published in other papers.

Each year we received at least 100 enquiries, or on average, 10 enquiries per month, with the number increasing every year.

Approximately half of the enquiries we dealt with by phone or e-mail conversation. In other cases, mostly at our own expense, we identified the bats in the field, or took them home for rehabilitative care.

Year	No. enquiries	Average enquiries per month	No. bats in rehabilitation	No. released bats	% released bats
2009	103	8.6	30	16	53
2010	102	8.5	28	18	64
2011	94	7.8	23	18	78
2012	173	14.4	34	14	41
2013	145	12.1	46	19	41
Total	617	10.3	161	85	53

We took into rehabilitative care 23-46 bats per year, and 14-19 of these (per year) were released, meaning that we were successful in rehabilitating nearly half of bats.



Enquiries are most frequent in the summer months from June to August (with findings of juvenile bats) and rarer in spring (May) and autumn (October, November).

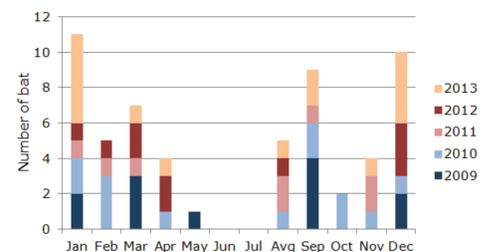
Species	No. bats	% of all	% of determined
<i>Pipistrellus nathusii</i>	58	9,4	18,9
<i>Pipistrellus sp.</i>	43	7,0	15,8
<i>Pipistrellus kuhlii</i>	32	5,2	12,1
<i>Pipistrellus pygmaeus</i>	26	4,2	9,8
<i>Hypsugo savii</i>	20	3,2	7,5
<i>Nyctalus noctula</i>	19	3,1	7,1
<i>Vespertilio murinus</i>	18	2,9	6,8
<i>Pipistrellus pipistrellus</i>	8	1,3	3
<i>Rhinolophus hipposideros</i>	7	1,1	2,6
<i>Barbastella barbastellus</i>	6	1	2,3
<i>Nyctalus leisleri</i>	5	0,8	1,9
<i>Myotis mystacinus</i>	4	0,6	1,5
<i>Eptesicus serotinus</i>	2	0,3	0,7
<i>Myotis emarginatus</i>	2	0,3	0,7
<i>Myotis myotis</i>	2	0,3	0,7
<i>Plecotus macrobullaris</i>	2	0,3	0,7
<i>Myotis mystacinus s.l.</i>	2	0,3	0,7
<i>Eptesicus nilssonii</i>	1	0,2	0,7
<i>Myotis daubentonii/capaccinii</i>	1	0,2	0,4
<i>Myotis myotis/blythii</i>	1	0,2	0,4
<i>Myotis nattereri</i>	1	0,2	0,4
Vespertilionidae	14	2,3	5,3
Chiroptera	343	55,6	/

Usually the bat species found were, as to be expected, those living in human settlements or in their vicinity. The most frequent species recorded were those of genus *Pipistrellus* – *P. nathusii*, followed by *P. kuhlii*, *P. pygmaeus*. Commonly found bat species were also *Hypsugo savii*, *Nyctalus noctula* and *Vespertilio murinus*.

It is worth mentioning that we also received calls from people who had bats at home and they wanted to get rid of them. Such cases were not so rare and represented 5-20% of all enquiries per year.

### Case study: *Pipistrellus nathusii*

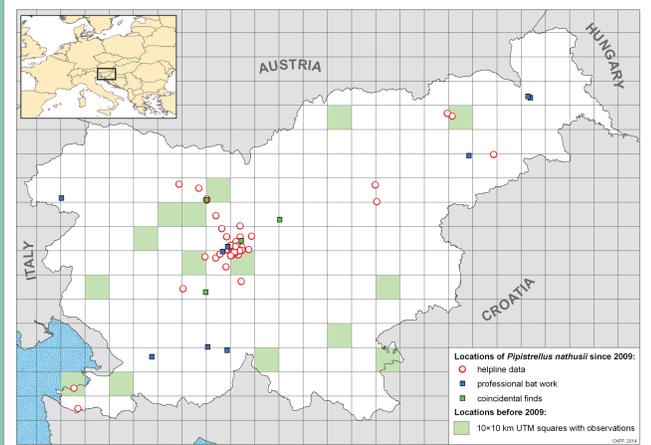
Findings of *P. nathusii* are concentrated in the winter (hibernating population in Slovenia), followed by the finds in the autumn (Avg, Sep) and spring (Mar, Apr) migration period.



In the national monitoring scheme it has been concluded that ultrasound detector transect surveys are not suitable for monitoring the presence of this migratory species.

Therefore, the chance findings of *P. nathusii* through our helpline are important in terms of monitoring the presence of this species in the country. Data collected by the helpline represents 80% of all collected data on the species in Slovenia between 2009 and 2013 (database CKFF 2014).

Even though "helpline" data is concentrated in central Slovenia where the majority of volunteers live, it also provided valuable distribution records in other parts of the country.



## Conclusions

Results indicate that systematically recording data related to public enquiries on bats is very important, since:

- grounded or injured bats received the help and got opportunity to return to nature,
- the data gathered provides new insights on the distribution and ecology of bats in Slovenia,
- such direct contacts presents great opportunity to educate the public about bats and the importance of their protection and conservation.

All these facts encourage us to continue with our voluntary phone bat helpline, with the hope it will get some permanent financial support.

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