



Press release

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Bat populations thriving

The number of bats increased in 2002. The numbers have been assessed by observing their winter residences. Seven out of all species monitored have on average more than doubled their numbers since 1990 and not only more common species such as the whiskered bat and the pond bat, but also less common species like the greater mouse-eared bat and the Geoffroy's bat. Recent figures by Statistics Netherlands show that the increase is not evenly spread throughout the country. A number of species are not doing very well in the marl pits in the province of Zuid-Limburg, whereas bats are thriving in the winter sanctuaries in the Veluwe region.

Strong increase in the Veluwe region

Since 1990, there has been a relatively strong growth of bats spending the winter in the bunkers in the Veluwe region. Daubenton's bat, pond bat, the whiskered bat and the brown long-eared bat are more frequently found. Protection of the bunkers is beginning to pay off. Many pond bats spend the winter in urban areas, but it is not clear whether these urban populations are also increasing. In the marl pits in Zuid-Limburg each species is developing at its own pace. The population of the Daubenton's bats increased, the pond bat and brown long-eared bat populations remained stable, whereas four other species grew in number. In particular the Natterer's bat population boomed.

Recovery began in the 1980s

In the 1950s most bat populations in the Netherlands were on the brink of extinction and some species such as the lesser horseshoe bat had indeed disappeared altogether. This was mainly caused by the use of insecticides and wood preservatives in agriculture and the sealing off and disturbance of the bats' summer and winter residences. The removal of wooded banks made it difficult for bats to get their bearings. The growth of the Daubenton's bat population set in as early as the 1950s, other species followed suit in the 1980s. The construction and protection of summer and winter residences in addition to a reduction of the use of insecticides contribute considerably to the growth of the various bat populations.

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Bats in the Netherlands in winter sanctuaries (index figures)

	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002
Whiskered bat	100	109	115	115	124	131	132	129	120	154	173	186	204
Natterer's bat	100	128	118	132	173	199	257	281	282	321	301	368	472
Brown long-eared bat	100	122	81	104	137	132	165	161	129	172	121	142	153
Geoffroy's bat	100	101	122	136	169	200	233	262	196	335	298	362	450
Pond bat	100	116	121	132	161	146	157	166	208	250	261	275	263
Greater mouse-eared bat	100	77	89	103	76	84	115	144	132	146	148	204	221
Daubenton's bat	100	106	94	111	111	114	118	129	109	133	128	140	156

Source: Statistics Netherlands