

All in a Day's Work

Daniel Buckley, Researcher, Centre for Irish Bat Research

Daniel Buckley is a researcher working for the Centre for Irish Bat Research, a cross-border project between National Parks and Wildlife Service, University College Dublin and Queens University Belfast.



Photos courtesy of Daniel Buckley

Abbey in Wexford or Killarney National park. My days are quite varied. I could be crawling around the attic of a house, surveying caves and mines or netting in woodland for bats. We also conduct radio tracking studies, where we tag a bat and follow it to see where it's going and what habitats it likes to hang out in.

What is the best thing about my job?

The best thing is getting to work with animals that I feel so passionate about. I also love the fact that I get to do this while travelling around and working in some of the most beautiful parts of Ireland.

What is the worst thing about my job?

The night time shift can be very tough on you, especially if you are radio tracking a bat all night. It is also depressing to meet people who really hate bats and can't be convinced otherwise no matter how much facts you throw at them!

What advice would you give someone wanting to do your job?

There are some very good books out there now about bats. I would recommend getting some of these to give you a good introduction to bats and their ecology. There are now lots of opportunities for hands-on experiences working with bats. Bat Conservation Ireland, a charity solely dedicated to the conservation of bats in Ireland, run a number of volunteer bat monitoring schemes, which are good fun and a great introduction to bat work. They also run an annual bat detector workshop where you will be given lessons on how to identify bats using a bat detector as well as in the hand. There are also lectures on bat ecology and bat surveying techniques. I would also highly recommend pursuing a degree in Zoology or Ecology in a university.

Have you always been interested in what you do?

I have always been fascinated in bats. I grew up on a farm in West Cork and we would often see bats flying around the place at night. I remember a very memorable occasion where a Leisler's bat flew into my room. I was scared at first but when I finally saw it up close I was amazed at its cute little face and incredible wing design. From that moment on I was hooked.

What training did you do to get where you are today?

In my teenage years I got involved with Cork County Bat Group. During this time I learned how to catch bats, identify the different types of Irish bats in the hand and with a bat detector, how to survey buildings for bats and how to deal with members of the public who have concerns with having bats in their houses.

I then pursued a degree in Applied Ecology in University College Cork where I learned how to think and write like a scientist. I was lucky enough to do my final year thesis looking at the habitat preferences of Irish bats.

What is a day in your life like?

The work I am involved with at the moment is looking at three of Ireland's rarest bats, the whiskered, Brandt's and Natterer's. This work takes me all across the island, surveying some amazing places, such as Tintern



Above: Setting up data loggers to survey bats in woodland.

Right: Whiskered bat.



Photos courtesy of Daniel Buckley

© 2009 Sherkin Island Marine Station & its licensors. All rights reserved.