

The first find of Bechstein's bat *Myotis bechsteinii* (Kuhl, 1817) summer roost in Slovenia

Prva najdba poletnega zatočišča velikouhega netopirja *Myotis bechsteinii* (Kuhl, 1817) v Sloveniji

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The Bechstein's bat (*Myotis bechsteinii*) is a medium sized bat, easily distinguished from other species of the genus *Myotis* due to its size (forearm length = 39.0 – 47.1 mm) and remarkably large, over 20 mm long ears (Dietz & von Helversen 2004). The species is distributed in Western, Central and Eastern Europe, where it inhabits mature deciduous forests at different altitudes (Dietz & Kiefer 2016). The Bechstein's bat is considered to be the most woodland dependent (Koselj 2009) out of 30 bat species currently living in Slovenia (Presetnik & Šalamun 2019). The distribution of the species in Slovenia is based mostly on mist-netting data from swarming sites at cave entrances. At the time when hibernating individuals were found on two occasions, no maternity or any other roosts were known in the country (CKFF 2021). This bat is known to roost in trunk crevices and tree holes, while roosts in buildings are scarce (Dietz & Kiefer 2016).

In July 2020 (17.7.–26.7.2020), the biological summer research camp (Raziskovalni tabor študentov biologije, RTŠB) was organised by the Biology Students' Society (Društvo študentov biologije) at Gorenja vas in north-western Slovenia. Even though both authors worked as members of the Ornithological Group, we collected other records as well. On 25.7.2020, we examined the drainage pipes underneath a bridge over one of the intermittent torrents flowing into the Cerknica River. The 5 m long, 2 m wide and 4 m high concrete bridge is located on the asphalt road connecting the settlements Gorenji Novaki and Podpleče within the municipality of Cerkno (WGS 84 Lat./Long.: 46.143583, 14.049306).

We examined two vertical drainage pipes with a diameter of 5 cm and depth of about 30 cm. In one of them we found a bat, which could be identified visually as Bechstein's bat (Fig. 1). We took a photograph and did not disturb the individual.



Figure 1: Bechstein's bat (*Myotis bechsteinii*) at its roost, a drainage pipe underneath a bridge at Gorenji Novaki on 25.7.2020 (photo: D. Knez).

Slika 1: Velikouhi netopir (*Myotis bechsteinii*) v zatočišču v odtočni cevi mostu v Gorenjih Novakih 25.7.2020 (Foto: D. Knez)

The presence of the species in the area was not surprising, as it had been mist-netted at a cave entrance about 10 km north several times before (Presetnik et al. 2020). The interesting aspect of the find is that it is the first summer roost of the Bechstein's bat recorded in Slovenia. Furthermore, the bat utilized an artificially made roost, and not a tree crevice, where the species usually roosts (Dietz & Kiefer 2016). Some individuals of this species have also been reported from under bridges in Bulgaria, where they roosted not in drainage pipes, but in crevices between bricks (Petrov 2006). This makes our finding interesting for understanding the roosting ecology of the species in general.

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