

Site Name: Kilgarvan Ice House SAC

Site Code: 000364

This site contains three buildings and some woodland used by the Lesser Horseshoe Bat. An ice house, situated within Glannaserha Wood on a fairly steep slope above the Roughty River is used as a hibernating site by the bats. It is situated about 2 km west of Kilgarvan in Co. Kerry. The two other buildings, Caher Bridge Cottage which is situated approximately 3 km west of the ice house, and William King House, approximately 4 km east of the ice house, contain nursery roosts.

The site is a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) selected for the following habitats and/or species listed on Annex I / II of the E.U. Habitats Directive (* = priority; numbers in brackets are Natura 2000 codes):

[1303] Lesser Horseshoe Bat (<i>Rhinolophus hipposideros</i>)

The stone ice house, formerly used for storing food, satisfies the necessary temperature and humidity requirements of this species during hibernation. The surrounding coniferous woodland, forms part of the site as it provides both suitable foraging habitat and shelter for bats. This wood comprises approximately 80% commercial conifer species, with the remainder being a mix of Beech (*Fagus sylvatica*), Oak (*Quercus* spp.) and other species. A fringe of riverine habitat occurs along the northern boundary of the site and near the ice house.

The number of bats using the ice house has increased since a metal grille was fitted in 1987. In the winter of 1995/96, 300 bats were recorded here making this a site of international importance. This is probably one of the largest hibernating sites for the species in Europe.

Both of the summer roosts are in good condition and are now being managed for the bats. They both support roosts of international importance. During the summer of 2001 up to 191 bats were counted in Caher Bridge Cottage and 175 in a barn at William King House. These are the closest known maternity roosts to the hibernaculum and it is assumed that the bats in these summer roosts are associated with the ice house. The Roughty River connects all three sites and this is lined with riparian woodland which provides good foraging habitat and a suitable commuting corridor for the bats.

Clear-felling of the woodland around the ice house, which would lead to a decline in the number of bats, is the main threat to this population. This site is one of the most important in the country for Lesser Horseshoe Bat.