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NEW STATIONS OF *SICISTA BETULINA* (PALLAS, 1779) IN THE EAST POLAND

NOWE STANOWISKA *SICISTA BETULINA* (PALLAS, 1779) NA TERENIE WSCHODNIEJ POLSKI

The birchmouse, *Sicista betulina* (Pallas) is an animal so extremely rarely encountered in the fauna of Poland that the discovery of any new station of its occurrence is worthy of note.

On account of the character of this note I consider it useful to give a list of the places within the present frontiers of Poland where the birchmouse has hitherto been found. Taczanowski (1887) published the news that one specimen of this animal had been found at Mdzewko near Mława. Wałecki (1881) includes it in the list of Polish mammals, and in a separate monograph (1884) gives the three stations of this species known to him:

1. 1870 — the first specimen found in Poland — in the Mława district.
2. 1881 — Kijany district by the River Wieprz (Lublin province).
3. 1880 — Western Tatra Mountains (Chochołowska Valley) — Kocyan's collection.

Wałecki emphasises the wide geographical dispersion of these positions of the birchmouse, and is of the opinion that it is possible that this animal occurs in other parts of Poland, especially in the east and in the Carpathian foothills.

Further investigations served to supplement this list. The birchmouse was found in the Mazurian Lake District, near Leszno Wielkopolskie (verbal information given by Professor Dehnel), in Silesia, at Białowieża, in the Augustów district and in the Pieniny Mountains. The occurence of the birchmouse in the Bieszczady Mountains was recently confirmed by Czarnecki (1954) and Skuratowicz (Grodziński, 1957).

The positions given were established by capturing single specimens. Exceptionally, the captures carried out at Białowieża over a period of 13 years demonstrated the relatively numerous occurrence of this species in certain biotopes of the Białowieża National Park.

An analysis of the geographical distribution of *Sicista betulina* (Pallas) based on the map included in the work by Kahmann & Wachtendorf (1951) reveals that its range includes the whole of Poland, and the possibility must therfore be taken into consideration of the occurence of this mammal in suitable biotopes throughout Poland (Kubik, 1952; Pucek, 1958). It would seem that the lack of facts in support of this view is solely due to difficulties in finding suitable methods of capturing birchmice, and in carrying out a faunistic check of extensive areas of Poland.

The material in which the birchmice were found was taken exclusively from owl pellets, and was obtained during a single collection made from church towers in 1956—57 by T. Buchalczyk and in 1959 by T. Bu-

chalczyk and J. Raczyński. During the course of the analysis so far made of owl pellets, bone remains of *Sicista betulina* (Pallas) have been found in eight places (see Table).

The bone material obtained from pellets sometimes exhibits considerable damage in the skulls, and in the case in question the maxillae were better preserved. It should be emphasised the the apparent similarity between the maxillae of birchmice and *Murinae* (in particular of *Mus musculus* L.) generally occurring in great numbers, makes a detailed inspection of the material essential.

Locality	District	Date of collection	Number of skulls	Number of maxillae Left	Right	No. of individuals	Total no. of mammals
1. Małkinia	Ostrów Maz.	15.VII.1957	-	6	3	6	374
2. Downary	Mońki	6. IX.1956	1	1	1	1	519
		16. VI.1959	2	2	2	2	881
3. Bajtkowo	Ełk	16. VI.1959	1[y]	-	1	1	232
4. Narew	Hajnówka	23.VIII. 57	-	1	2	2	785
5. Werbkowice	Hrubieszów	16.XII.1957	2	3	5	5	570
6. Miączyn	Hrubieszów	28. XI.1955	2	-	1	2	200
7. Brok	Ostrów Maz.	6.VIII.1956	1	1	1	1	445
8. Grabowo	Gołdap	16. VI.1959	-	1	1	1	153
Total			9	15	17	21	4159

[y] Fragment of maxillae.

It would seem that an analysis of owl pellets may serve a useful purpose in supplementing data on the distribution of the birchmouse over Poland. Exact recording of a greater number of stations would undoubtedly contribute to a more exact definition of the biotopes of the birchmouse, and would also increase our knowledge of the biology of this mammal.

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