

1<sup>st</sup> International Experts Exchange:

# The Northern Birchmouse (*Sicista betulina*)

Ecology, Monitoring & Conservation



Stiftung Naturschutz Schleswig-Holstein

Kiel-Molfsee (Germany)

28 – 30 October 2012



Book of Programme, Abstracts, Presentations and Conclusions

this workshop was cofinanced by

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**Front cover picture:** Painting of *Sicista betulina* by Peter Simon Pallas



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**Proposal for citation of contribution**

Author of contribution. Title of contribution [abstract / presentation]. In: 1<sup>st</sup> International Experts Exchange – The Northern Birchmouse (*Sicista betulina*), 2012 October 28 – 30, Kiel-Molfsee, Germany. Self-published online by Stiftung Naturschutz Schleswig-Holstein. 2012, pages x – y. ([www.birkenmaus.de](http://www.birkenmaus.de))

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## **4.9. Romania**

### **4.9.1. Abstract**

#### **Status of the Northern Birch Mouse (*Sicista betulina*) in Romania**

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In Romania the Northern Birch Mouse (*Sicista betulina*) is probably one of the rarest small mammal species, and certainly one of the least studied ones. The Romanian Carpathians constitute the southern boundary of its European distribution. Occurrence data of the species are scattered, and have mostly been collected as part of general small mammal surveys. The total number of records is 8, of which 7 from the Eastern Carpathians, and only one from the Southern Carpathians. Specimens of Northern Birch Mouse are presently being stored in the collection of at least two natural history Museums of Romania. The way of locating the specimens include snap trapping and pitfall trapping, catching by hand as well as visual observations. The first two individuals were collected in 1943 by Gy. Éhik and I. Loksa in the Gurghiu Mts. One specimen was caught in 1962 by K. Rauschert, in the Bucegi Mts.; this record is generally considered to be the first one for Romania, as the previous record had not been published at that time. Further it was found in the Rarău Mts. in 1964 and in the Ceahlău Mts. in 1966 by V. Simionescu. In 1996 D. Murariu collected one specimen in the Rodnei Mts. One individual was observed in 2006 in the Gurghiu Mts. In 2008 an adult male was caught by hand in the Giurgeu Depression, and in 2010 another two specimens were caught at the same location, one caught in pitfall trap and one by hand. Habitats where the species has been found in the Romanian Carpathians include the following: clearcut planted with young deciduous and coniferous forest, mixed (deciduousconiferous) forest, beech-silver fir forest with Heartleaf Oxeye (*Telekia speciosa*) and Male Fern (*Dryopteris filix-mas*) undergrowth, and fen with Birch (*Betula pendula*). Altitudes range from below 700 to above 2000 m. The Northern Birch Mouse is a protected species in Romania and is included in the Red Data Book as ‘critically endangered’, although a proper assessment of its status and threats has never been done. Considering the habitat preferences of the species in the Carpathians, we can assume that it is much more common in Romania than it is actually known.