

# Rats nest in cars in Helsinki

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HELSINKI, Sept. 18 (Xinhua) -- While automobiles may have excellent protection against thieves, rats can find a way to get in through the chasis, media reported on Monday.

Jouni Siltala, technical chief at the pest control company Rentokil, told newspaper Helsingin Sanomat that rats have penetrated cars and tried to make a nest in the car.

Siltala speculated that rats have found a route via the engine space. "This has happened in open air parking lots where holes of rats are in the vicinity."

Researcher Otso Huiti at the Finnish Natural Resources Centre told Helsingin Sanomat that the warm winters of recent years have helped the rat population grow in Finnish cities.

In Helsinki, the eradication directed in recent years against rabbits has benefited the rats. The rats have often occupied the holes inhabited earlier by the rabbits.

The Finnish Natural Resources Centre is trying to assess the size of the rat population. Huiti noted that the "city ecology" of rats is not much researched. "Scientists have rather concentrated on ways of killing the rats," he said.

Last winter rats managed to occupy the parkette outside the National Theatre and the statue of Finnish writer Aleksis Kivi. The area has been since under special observation.

Biologist Raimo Pakarinen at the city of Helsinki declined to describe the rats as aggressive. "They are not any more aggressive than ducks or seagulls approaching a person in the hope of getting food."

Pakarinen said that the movements of rats could be observed through GPS-gadgets attached to them, but the signals of equipment may not penetrate the structures in the city's sewage system, he said.