

**THE AGREEMENT ON THE CONSERVATION OF
POPULATIONS OF EUROPEAN BATS
[EUROBATS]**

NATIONAL REPORT TO MoP 5

Ireland

2003 - 2006

A. General Information

Name of party - Ireland

Date of Report - 3 August 2006

Period Covered - September 2003 – August 2006

Competent Authority - National Parks and Wildlife Service
Department of Environment, Heritage and Local
Government
7 Ely Place
Dublin 2
Ireland

Tel: 353-1-8883290
Fax: 353-1-8883278

Appointed member of
the Advisory Committee - Dr Ferdia Marnell

Abbreviations

BCI Bat Conservation Ireland
BCT Bat Conservation Trust
DAF Department of Agriculture and Food
EBRS European Bat Research Symposium
NGO non-Governmental organisation
NPWS National Parks and Wildlife Service
SAC Special Area of Conservation
VWT The Vincent Wildlife Trust

B. Status of Bats Within the Territory of the Party

1 Summary Details of Resident Species

Two new species of bats have been confirmed in Ireland in the last 3 years – *Pipistrellus nathusii* and *Myotis brandtii*. This brings the total number of bat species in the country to ten :

- (a) Common Pipistrelle – *Pipistrellus pipistrellus*
- (b) Soprano Pipistrelle – *P. pygmaeus*
- (c) Nathusius's Pipistrelle – *P. nathusii*
- (d) Brown Long-eared Bat – *Plecotus auritus*
- (e) Leisler's Bat – *Nyctalus leisleri*
- (f) Whiskered Bat – *Myotis mystacinus*
- (g) Brandt's Bat – *M. brandtii*
- (h) Daubenton's Bat – *M. daubentoni*
- (i) Natterer's Bat – *M. nattereri*
- (j) Lesser Horseshoe Bat – *Rhinolophus hipposideros*

2 Status and Trends

We are gradually developing a comprehensive National Bat Monitoring Programme for Ireland. Population trend data is now being collected on an annual basis for five of Ireland's bat species :

- i) NPWS conducts annual monitoring at maternity and hibernation sites of *Rhinolophus hipposideros*. In February 2006, 100 known winter sites throughout its range in the west of Ireland were surveyed. 32 people were involved in the survey and 4,260 bats were counted (approximately 45% of the national population). During June 2006, 153 known summer sites were monitored and approximately 5,500 bats were counted (approximately 60% of the national population). Although most of the sites included in the annual monitoring programme are known to be important for this species, a proportion of the sites were included where only a small number of droppings or individual bats had previously been recorded. Most of these minor roosts are at the edge of the bat's range in Ireland and by monitoring these on a regular basis (e.g. every 3 years) it is hoped to chart any changes in the species distribution.
- ii) A car-based survey for bats was initiated in Ireland in 2003. This scheme has expanded year on year. In 2004, fifteen 30km squares were surveyed; in 2005, eighteen 30km squares (1056km of monitoring transects) were surveyed. NPWS work closely with the Environment and Heritage Service in Northern Ireland [EHS] on a number of cross-border projects and in 2006 the car

transect programme has been expanded to 26 squares including 3 in Northern Ireland, making it an international bat monitoring programme (see Fig 1). Robust data is being collected for 3 widespread species - *Pipistrellus pipistrellus*, *P. pygmaeus* and *Nyctalus leisleri* – but it is still too early to draw any conclusions on population trends for these species.

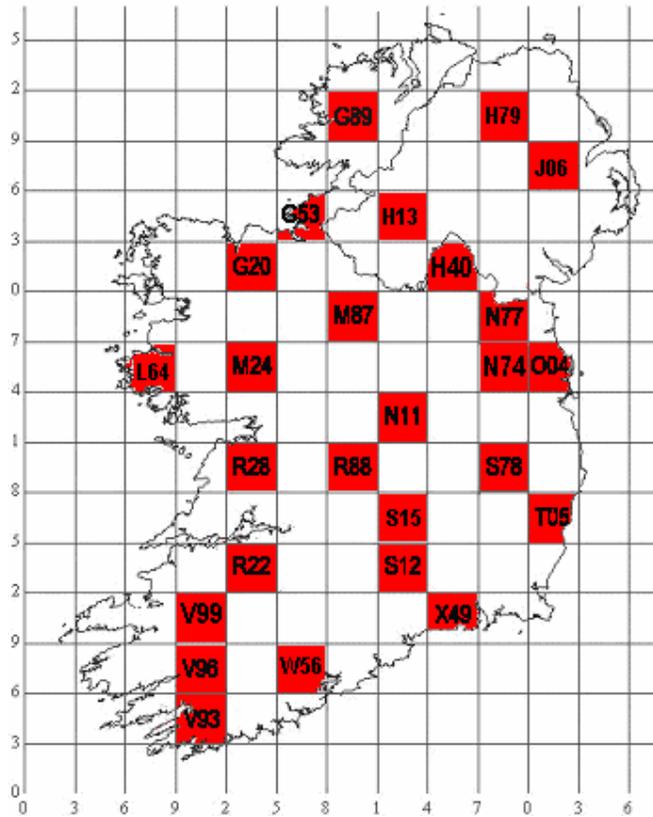


Fig. 1 The 30 km squares being surveyed in the all-Ireland car-based bat monitoring programme.

- iii) A small pilot waterways survey was tested in summer 2005 based on the established BCT protocol. This methodology is known to provide good data on *Myotis daubentoni*. This survey is being rolled out across Ireland in 2006, with the cooperation of EHS. 207 people attended training courses during June and July 2006 and it is hoped that as many as 100 transects will be surveyed before the end of August 2006. As with the car-based survey, the waterways survey will be coordinated by BCI, the national bat NGO.

3 Habitats and Roost Sites

Grilling has been carried out at a number of important *Rhinolophus hipposideros* roosts which had been suffering from disturbance. Re-roofing works have also been carried out at number of *Rhinolophus* maternity roosts in Kerry.

The VWT continue to manage 12 reserves for *R. hipposideros* in Ireland. While most of these are roost-only sites, habitat management, including tree planting and hedgerow maintenance, is conducted at a number of sites as well.

Several important winter and summer roosts for this species occur in old buildings within woodlands owned by Coillte – the national forestry agency. Regular meetings take place at a local level between Coillte staff and NPWS staff to ensure that woodland management at these sites is sensitive to the roosting, foraging and commuting requirements of the bats.

4 Threats

The main threats to bats in Ireland come from roost renovation and destruction, loss of foraging habitat, disruption of commuting routes, pollution and use of harmful chemicals.

Agricultural intensification may be reducing prey abundance for bats generally, but there is new evidence from studies of *Rhinolophus hipposideros* in the west of Ireland to show that this species may rely heavily in winter on insects associated with cattle dung.

5 Data collection, analysis, interpretation and dissemination

Data collection is ongoing. A standardised recording form has been developed [see Appendix 1] and a centralised database for bat roost information is being fine-tuned in cooperation with BCI. These will greatly facilitate the analysis, interpretation and dissemination of bat data.

Following inconclusive results from the 2004 survey, the Department of Agriculture and Food undertook a second survey for rabies in Daubenton's bats at a roost in the south of the country during the summer of 2005. Tissue and saliva samples were sent to the veterinary labs in Weymouth, England for analysis. Once again no conclusive results emerged. BCI have undertaken to draft a protocol for rabies testing in Ireland, to be carried out in conjunction with NPWS and DAF.

C. Measures Taken to Implement Article III of the Agreement

6 Legal Measures

All bats in Ireland are protected under the Wildlife Acts [1976 and 2000] which make it an offence to deliberately kill or injure any bat species or to damage its roosts. This act is policed throughout the country by Conservation Rangers from the NPWS of the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government. Approximately 12 - 15 licences are issued each year under the *Wildlife Acts (1976 and 2000)* to facilitate bat research and bat surveys e.g. to undertake mist netting or radio-tagging studies.

As provided for under the EU Habitats Directive, derogations for the disturbance or destruction of bat roosts are issued, subject to strict criteria, under Article 25 of *European Communities (Natural Habitats) Regulations, 1997*.

7 Sites identified and protected

NPWS has an active programme of repairing/restoring lesser horseshoe roosts within SACs. The VWT employs a full-time field officer in Ireland and additional staff are employed by them on short contracts to conduct intensive surveys to locate new lesser

horseshoe roosts. The VWT continues to acquire and manage vulnerable maternity roosts of the lesser horseshoe. See also B. 3 above.

8 Consideration given to important bat habitats

Bat detector and radio-tagging surveys, together with faecal analyses, have been carried out at a number of important *R. hipposideros* summer and winter roosts in Counties Kerry and Clare. These surveys have highlighted the importance of wetland and woodland sites as foraging habitat for this species. They have also reinforced the significance of hedgerows for commuting.

9 Activities carried out to promote the awareness of the importance of the conservation of bats

The 10th European Bat Research Symposium took place in Galway, Ireland from 20-26 August 2005. The meeting was a great success, attended by over 200 delegates from 30 countries. The symposium was preceded by a Bat Workshop in Killarney National Park in Kerry. A report from this very informative workshop can be downloaded from www.npws.ie and the Eurobats website. Highlights of the workshop included the definitive identification for the first time in southern Ireland of *P. nathusii* and *M. brandtii*.

Several events are organised by NPWS staff and local bat groups around the country for European Bat Night each year.

Bat Conservation Ireland is continuing to grow and develop and is working on a number of projects with NPWS [see their website: www.batconservationireland.org].

A report on the car-based monitoring programme was published in 2005 and can be downloaded from www.npws.ie and the Eurobats website

10 Responsible bodies nominated for the provision of advice on bat conservation and management.

NPWS of the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government is the body responsible for the provision of advice on bat conservation and management. NPWS has recently published “*A conservation plan for vesper bats*”. This report can be downloaded from the NPWS website [www.npws.ie].

The Heritage Council, a statutory body, has funded the production of a booklet on the conservation and management requirements of all bat species in Ireland. Local authority Heritage Officers may also provide advice at a county level and are involved in local bat projects. BCI provide a seasonal help-line for the provision of advice on bat related issues.

11 Additional action undertaken to safeguard populations of bats.

NPWS maintains a close working relationship with other government agencies and with non-governmental organisations involved in bat conservation, in particular the VWT and BCI. NPWS in partnership with VWT has repaired sites and undertaken surveys and site monitoring.

The Heritage Council provides grant-aid for the renovation of historic buildings. The Heritage Council requires bat surveys to be undertaken in advance of any works.

12 Recent and ongoing programmes relating to conservation and management of bats.

See B. 2 and B. 3 above.

13 Consideration being given to effects of pesticides on bats.

No further developments in this area.

D. Functioning of Agreement

14 Co-operation with other Range States

Ireland is co-operating with other Range States and with other Member States of the EU in research and conservation matters. In particular, there is close cooperation between NPWS and EHS in Northern Ireland and a number of bat monitoring schemes are now being conducted on an all-Ireland level. NPWS and EHS are also working to develop a joint species action plan for bats.

A Eurobats Intersessional Working Group on overground roosts, convened by Dr Ferdia Marnell, involves co-operation with bat experts in the UK, Italy, Lithuania, Slovakia, Croatia and Slovenia.

15 Measures taken to implement MoP Resolutions

Resolution 2.2 Database of Monitoring Results

Details of monitoring programmes underway in Ireland have been forwarded to the relevant Working Group. F. Marnell attended the Eurobats workshop on Monitoring Guidelines held in Surrey in April 2006.

Resolution 2.4 Transboundary Programme – underground habitats

Underground habitats are particularly important for *Rhinolophus hipposideros* in Ireland. NPWS maintains a database of roost monitoring data for this species and the relevant underground information has been forwarded to the Working Group on underground habitats.

Resolution 3.8 Foraging habitats

Survey work and diet analysis have been conducted at a number of *R. hipposideros* sites in Clare and Kerry. Data from these studies has been provided to the IWG addressing this issue.

Resolution 4.4 (2.4) Transboundary programme – forest practices

NPWS staff liaise on an ongoing basis with colleagues in Forestry to ensure that woodland management adjacent to important bats sites is undertaken sensitively.

Resolution 4.7 Wind turbines and bat populations

Ireland have responded to the questionnaire circulated by the IWG working on this issue.

Resolution 4.9 Protection of overground roosts

F. Marnell convenes the IWG set up at AC9 to address this resolution. This working group met at EBRIS X in Galway in August 2005 and reported to AC11. A draft resolution has been prepared for MoP 5.
