Agreement on the Conservation of Populations of European Bats (EUROBATS)

English Translation of the part of Wallonie in the
Belgian National Implementation Report 2003
(with reference to Inf.EUROBATS.MoP4.11)

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A. General information

Name of the country part: Belgium-Wallonia
Report date: 20 May 2003
Spanned period: 1995 – 2003
Relevant authorities: Ministry of the Walloon Region, "Direction Générale des Ressources Naturelles et de l'Environnement, Division de la Nature et des Forêts (5100 JAMBES – Avenue Prince de Liège, 15 – Belgium).
Council Committee members: P. De Wolf, J.Fairon
Members of other committee/working group: J.Fairon, C.Debruyne

B. Status of Bats within the Region

1. Species

20 Species are reported in Wallonia :

Rhinolophus ferrumequinum

Limited distribution, mainly in the karstic zone, stretching also to areas where the artificial underground environment is significantly present. Currently, the "trench Sambre-et-Meuse" marks the northern limit of its distribution, with a few exceptions. The species winters in an artificial or natural underground environment. The reproduction is known in less than ten anthropogenic sites. Less than 250 individuals can be counted in the winter period of whom a large number reproduces in France (Ardennes and Lorraine).

Rhinolophus hipposideros

Populations are very small and isolated, also mainly in the karstic zone and in the south of the "trench Sambre-et-Meuse". The species winters in an artificial or natural

underground environment. The reproduction is known also in less than 10 sites, all in anthropogenic environment. Less than 100 individuals are still yearly observed.

Myotis myotis

The known population is mainly located at the south of the “trench Sambre-et-Meuse”. This species winters in underground environment and less than 200 individuals are registered during this period. It mainly breeds in anthropogenic environment. Less than 10 reproduction colonies are known and they concern around 700 adults. Note the disproportion between both periods.

Myotis bechsteini

Population not well known. The number of individuals is still very weak, less than 20 individuals in winter. Reproduction colonies are unknown.

Myotis emarginatus

The distribution of this species concerns the whole Wallonia territory, except its western limous area. During the winter, less than 100 individuals are registered in underground environment. Less than 10 reproduction colonies are known, all in anthropogenic environment and count less than 500 individuals.

Myotis nattereri

The population is distributed everywhere over Wallonia. However, less than 50 individuals are counted during the winter in the underground environment. Three reproduction colonies are known and count less than 100 individuals.

Myotis mystacinus

Important population, present nearly everywhere but bound to forest zones. The number of known reproduction roost is relatively weak (less than ten) but is not representative of the reality.

Myotis brandti

Considering the difficulty of determination and differentiation of these species and the previous without, its population remains badly known. A study based on the national collection IRSNB (J.FAIRON 1980) shows that the proportion of this species compared to the *mystacinus/brandti* complex is about 14 %.

Myotis dasycneme

The species is observed in winter, in about ten cavities. In the summer, acoustic observations would show its presence, especially in the basin of the Meuse. No colony has presently been found in Wallonia.

Myotis daubentonii

This species is amongst the best geographically represented in Wallonia. It is observed in most wintering cavities, sometimes very numerous (from a few dozens to several hundreds) as in ancient marl quarries in the north of the "trench Sambre-et-Meuse". Reproduction colonies are scarce (< 10).

Pipistrellus pipistrellus

Since the description of the *pygmaeus* species, it becomes difficult to distinguish the species' in the collections and by visual observations. It is thus advisable to be careful and to talk about the *pipistrellus/pygmaeus* complex. In this case, this complex represents an abundant and ubiquitous population, during the summer as well the winter.

Pipistrellus pygmaeus

Numerous acoustic observations have already recognized this species in various places. It is nevertheless a bit too early to be able to know its distribution. No genetic search has been currently realised in Wallonia.

Pipistrellus nathusii

Mainly known as migratory and thus generally observed in winter. Less than 5 observations are currently at our disposal. It is thus impossible to set up a credible geographical status. We can nevertheless suppose that we can meet it all over Wallonia.

Eptesicus serotinus

The species is quite well distributed in Wallonia according to the acoustic data, and more than 40 summer colonies are known. Winter data are scarcer and always fortuitous in the underground (less than 20 cavities concerned).

Vespertilio murinus

The species would have been observed twice in Wallonia. Its status is not known.

Nyctalus noctula

The geographical status is very badly known. However the acoustic observation, which is among the most reliable, shows a larger distribution than the direct observations could make believe.

Nyctalus leisleri

Besides some acoustic observations, few data are available. Only one reproduction colony has been observed, in the south.

Barbastella barbastellus

This species has become extremely rare since 30 years. In 10 years its presence has been notified in less than 5 sites.

Plecotus auritus

The brown long-eared bat occupies the whole territory concerned, though it is never very common in the underground. About twenty reproduction colonies are known.

Plecotus austriacus

The species seems to be avoiding the Ardennes. We currently know 7 reproduction colonies. Reliable observations in the winter are scarce.

2. Status and trends

a) Estimation of the population - the following table concern the observations of populations, except the acoustic ones (because they do not offer the needed scientific reliability and are still very scattered and not published yet).
b) Known roost sites : W = winter, S = summer, R = reproduction.
c) Status : D = in danger, V = vulnerable, R = rare or restricted geographical distribution, N = not in danger, ? = not known.
d) Tendencies : D = decline, S = stable, ? = not known.
e) Threats : E = environment - ecological network, Wr = winter roost, Sr = summer and reproduction roost, ? = not known.

Species	Pop. estimation	Known roost sites	Status	Trends	Threats
Rhinolophus ferrumequinum	> 300	W, S, R	D	D	E, Wr, Sr
Rhinolophus hipposideros	> 100	W, S, R	D	D	E, Wr, Sr
Myotis myotis	< 1000	W, S, R	D	D	E, Wr, Sr
Myotis bechsteini	?	W	?	?	E
Myotis emarginatus	< 500	W, S, R	E	S	E, Wr, Sr
Myotis nattereri	?	W, S, R	V	D	E, Wr, Sr
Myotis mystacinus	< 1000	W, S, R	N	S	E, Wr, Sr
Myotis brandti	?	W	?	?	E
Myotis dasycneme	?	W	D	D	Wr, Sr
Myotis daubentonii	< 1000	W, S, R	V	S	E, Wr, Sr
Pipistrellus pipistrellus	< 5000	W, S, R	N	S	Wr, Sr
Pipistrellus pygmaeus	?	?	?	?	?
Pipistrellus nathusii	?	?	?	?	?
Eptesicus serotinus	< 500	W, S, R	D	D	E, Wr, Sr

Vespertilio murinus	?	?	R	?	?
Nyctalus noctula	?	?	?	?	?
Nyctalus leisleri	?	?	?	?	?
Barbastella barbastellus	> 20	W	R	D	?
Plecotus auritus	< 500	W, S, R	V	D	E, Wr, Sr
Plecotus austriacus	< 200	W, S, R	V	D	E, Wr, Sr

3. Habitats and Roost:

see point 1.

4. Threats

- Most threats concern the loss of winter and reproduction roosts as well as the worsening of the ecological network.
- The consequence of the use of pesticides and products for timber protection is more insidious.
- The increasingly frequent placing of mobile phone aerials on buildings could be dangerous; it is a matter where the precaution principle is generally unrespected.

5. Data collection

- The "Centre de Recherche de la Nature, des Forêts et du Bois", of the Ministry of the Walloon region, collects the data.
- The **"Royal Institute of Natural Sciences of Belgium"** (Brussels) owns officially registered scientific collections, as well as the whole of the chiropterological data prior to 2001.

C. Measures taken to implement Article III of the Agreement

5. Legal measures taken to protect bats

- The law on nature conservation dated July 12th, 1973.
- Decree of the "Executif Régional Wallon" related to the conservation of certain indigenous wild living animal species, dated March 30th, 1983. (Concerns all bat species).
- Bern Convention dated September 1st, 1982 (Annexes II and III) related to European wild life and natural habitats signed in Bern on September 19th 1979 and approved by the law of April 20th, 1989.

- Bonn Convention dated June 23rd 1979 (Annexe II) related to the conservation of migrating wild animal species and approved by the law dated April 27th, 1990.
- European Directive "Fauna - Flora - Habitats (92/43/EEC)" dated May 21st 1992 (Annexes II and IV) organizing the conservation of species and their habitats.
- London Agreement "Bat Agreement" (EUROBATS) related to the conservation of bats in Europe, approved by the Walloon Region on March 17th, 1995 and by Belgium on May 14th, 2003.
- Decree of the Government of Wallonia organizing the conservation of underground cavities of scientific interest on January 26th, 1995.

6. Identified and protected sites for bats conservation

a) Winter underground surroundings

The first chiropterological reserves have been created by the **Royal Institute of Natural Sciences of Belgium** in 1973 and then transmitted to the Walloon region. Currently, Wallonia counts 136 protected underground cavities (67 as National Natural Reserves and 69 as underground cavities of scientific interest).

b) Summer and reproduction anthropogenic environment

Since 1995 (European Year of Nature Conservation), conventions have been passed between the commons and the Ministry of the Walloon region in order to attribute lofts and towers of church and other public buildings to the conservation of wild species in danger, especially bats.

Currently, 106 out of the 262 Walloon commons have signed this agreement. There are more than 825 concerned buildings (more than 500 have already been fitted). Every attribution concerns effective as well as potential roost.

7. Considerations about habitats which are important to bats :

- For roost, see point 7.
- For feeding places, except some punctual studies related to targeted colonies (*Rhinolophus hipposideros*, *Eptesicus serotinus* and *Myotis emarginatus*), it has to be considered that few have been done yet.

  The management of "Natura 2000" sites will consider this aspect in general, as well as preserving and restoring the ecological network.

8. Activities to promote the awareness of the importance of bats conservation:

a) Publicity, awareness

- An advertising leaflet of several thousand copies has been edited since 1995; it has just been brought updated in a new edition.
- A technical document "Guide for the fitting of church lofts and - towers and other buildings" has been edited in 1995 and more than 10.000 copies have been distributed. This document has just been re-examined and greatly increased; it is currently being published. A German version is also being realised.
- The Ministry of the Walloon region has set up a website related to the conservation of bats (http://mrw.wallonie.be/dgrne/sibw/especes/ecologie/mammiferes/chauvessouris/home.html), as well as a website, which is more oriented to " church lofts and steeple " (http://mrw.wallonie.be/dgrne/dnf/comblesetclochers)
- Conventions are created for actions to raise the public awareness for bats conservation.

b) Education

- Participation to audience information through the touristic centre of Comblain-au-Pont "Les Découvertes Mystères de Comblain-au-Pont".

c) European Bat Night

- The European Bat Night takes place in Wallonia since 5 years. In August 2002, it appends in 26 different places in the region, concerning more than 1500 participants.

9. Responsible bodies for Article III.5 of the Agreement

- The responsible body for nature conservation in the Walloon region is the "Ministère de la Région wallonne, Direction Générale des Ressources Naturelles et de l'Environnement, Division de la Nature et des Forêts (B-5100 JAMBES - Avenue Prince de Liège, 15 - Belgique).

10. Additional action undertaken to safeguard populations of bats:

none.

11. Recent and ongoing programmes (including research and policy initiatives) relating to the conservation and management of bats.

- Follow-up of the bat populations in Wallonia, especially within the framework of the "Supervision of the state of the environment of Wallonia" by bio-indicators.

- Continuation of the protection of underground sites in favour of bats and their technical and scientific management.
- Continuation of the creation of protected anthropic sites, their fitting and technical and scientific management.
- Contacts with the architects of Direction de la Restauration du Ministère de la Région wallonne, Direction de l'Aménagement du Territoire, Logement et Patrimoine.
- Contact with the "Cellule Mines et Exploitation du Ministère de la Région wallonne, Direction Générale des Ressources Naturelles, Division de la Prévention et des Autorisations".

12. Problem of pesticides in general and especially of timber treatment with chemical toxic for bats.

- There are several regulations on pesticides use.
- Information and advices given in the technical document "Church lofts and steeple".

D. Functioning of the Agreement

13. Cooperation with other Range States

- Cross-border cooperation on the conservation of bats in Mid-Western Europe with Germany, France and Luxemburg.
- Cross-border technical and scientific information related to the operation "Church lofts and steeple" in Luxemburg and in France.