



## Launch of BatLife Europe

Vilnius (Lithuania), 24 August 2011: Today scientists and conservationists gathered at the XII European Bat Research Symposium for the launch of BatLife Europe, a new international conservation NGO which aims to combat the threats to bats. Built from a partnership of national bat conservation organisations, BatLife Europe will promote the conservation of all bat species and their habitats throughout Europe.

Across Europe there are 53 species of bat, a fifth of our mammal species. Bats are an important part of our natural heritage, enjoyed by many people, and indicators of a green and healthy environment, so their future is directly linked to our quality of life and the quality of our environment. European bats eat mosquitoes, beetles, flies, moths and other insects - with the exception of one – the Egyptian fruit bat which lives on a diet of dates, figs and flower nectar.

Many European bats are under threat and some have already become extinct in certain countries. The main threats to bats in Europe include habitat loss, degradation and fragmentation of the landscape, development and persecution leading to loss of bat roosts (such as in buildings, trees, underground sites and bridges) and loss of insect rich feeding areas, disturbance and direct persecution of bats by people, due to intolerance and lack of understanding.

The first meeting of BatLife Europe's NGO members was held at the XII European Bat Research Conference on 23 August 2011, during the UN Year of the Bat. The meeting approved the membership of over 20 national bat conservation NGOs from across Europe, from Ireland to Finland and elected a Board of Trustees to run the NGO.

Julia Hanmer, Chair of BatLife Europe and Chief Executive of the UK based Bat Conservation Trust said "BatLife Europe gives an international voice for bats, and an opportunity to highlight priorities for national and pan European conservation action and facilitate sharing of knowledge. Key priorities will include addressing the potential threat to Europe's bats posed by lethal fungal infections and establishing pan-European bat monitoring programmes."

Andreas Streit, UNEP/Eurobats Executive Secretary says: "Having strongly supported the efforts of NGOs to establish BatLife Europe, it is a great pleasure and honour for me to witness it's launch today. I have no doubt that BatLife Europe will give bat conservation a

significant additional boost by strengthening the international conservation and research network, as well as the role of the NGOs in their relations with governments and international institutions. EUROBATS is very much looking forward to working together with BatLife Europe as a key partner in achieving our common goals!”

Professor Paul Racey, IUCN Bat Specialist Group Co Chair says “Every year bats migrate thousands of miles across Europe. BatLife Europe will help secure bat populations in Europe through joined up conservation action and tackle the pressures and threats bats face.”

BatLife Europe will establish pan-European partnership projects and activities to:

- Facilitate international communication and knowledge sharing
- Identify European conservation priorities and coordinate action in relation to special threats
- Collect and manage data
- Assist in capacity building of national NGOs and in developing/implementing national conservation plans
- Develop best practice guidelines and provide support and technical advice for initiatives of the Agreement on the Conservation of Populations of European Bats (EUROBATS)
- Give international status to national NGOs

The idea of BatLife Europe was first proposed by the IUCN Bat Specialist Group at the European Bat Research Symposium in Le Havre in 2002. Then, at the 11th meeting of the EUROBATS Advisory Committee in Luxembourg in 2006, it was agreed that the work of the many European NGOs committed to bat conservation would be enhanced by trans-boundary communication and coordination. The Bat Conservation Trust was invited to establish BatLife Europe and accepted. Over the past year 6 NGOs have united to found BatLife Europe and invite others to join them.

**Notes:**

- BatLife Europe is a newly forming international NGO built from a partnership of national bat conservation organisations that are committed to promoting the conservation of all bat species and their habitats throughout Europe. For further information visit [www.batlife-europe.info](http://www.batlife-europe.info) or contact [batlifeeurope@bats.org.uk](mailto:batlifeeurope@bats.org.uk) or one of the founding trustees:

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- **Eurobats:** [www.eurobats.org](http://www.eurobats.org). The Agreement on the Conservation of Populations of European Bats (EUROBATS), a binding international treaty which came into force in 1994, presently numbers 33 European states among its Parties and counts 62 range states plus the European Union within its territory. The Agreement was concluded under the auspices of the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS), which recognises that endangered migratory species can be properly protected only if activities are carried out over the entire migratory range of the species. EUROBATS aims to protect all 53 species of bats identified in Europe, through legislation, education, conservation measures and international co-operation with Agreement members and with countries which have not yet joined.
- **The Bat Specialist Group (BSG)** is a global network of bat specialists comprising over 130 bat biologists and conservationists from over 100 countries. The BSG is one of a number of specialist groups formed within the Species Survival Commission (SSC) of IUCN-The World Conservation Union (IUCN). The Species Survival Commission (SSC) Specialist Groups provide a wide range of member expertise to IUCN – The World Conservation Union - gathering information and performing species assessments for the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species, and producing species action plans and policy guidelines. For further information see [www.iucnbsg.org](http://www.iucnbsg.org).