

# 17<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Advisory Committee

Dublin, Ireland, 15 – 17 May 2012

## Secretariat Report



### **Staff**

Since January 2011 one of the two posts of Administrative Assistants is temporarily filled by Ana Ferreira da Silva until 31 November 2012. The Secretariat will make the necessary arrangements for the recruitment of a successor in a timely manner. At its 7<sup>th</sup> Meeting (Paris, France, March 2012) the Standing Committee has decided that the recruitment for the new P-2 post of Scientific and Project Officer should be started on a part-time basis.

### **Agreement Membership**

Since the 6<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Standing Committee, Montenegro has acceded to the Agreement. Switzerland is expected to submit its instrument of accession before AC17. The Secretariat continues to receive indications from a number of additional states preparing the accession to the Agreement.

### **Publicity**

The various volumes of the EUROBATS Publication Series continue to be “Bestsellers”.

In 2011 the following reprints have become necessary:

- Publication Series No. 2, 3 and 4 in English, French and German.
- Reprint of the German version of the Bats and Forestry Leaflet.

The European Bat Night continues to be successful and still be growing every year again all over the Agreement area. The secretariat continues to make available the posters of which a new version will have to be printed in 2012.

The Secretariat can also report that the Agreement excites continuing public interest resulting in requests for TV, Radio as well as Newspaper reports and interviews.

### **Progress on bats in Africa**

Although envisaged, in 2011 no further joint capacity building workshops together with FAO have materialised and it is yet unknown whether additional workshops will be organised in 2012.

In the margins of CMS CoP 10 (Bergen, Norway, November 2011) the proposal has emerged, that EUROBATS Parties might consider looking into the possibility of how the activities of their institutions for development co-operation could be combined with promoting and improving bat conservation in Africa. This will be an agenda item at StC7.

### **Special Projects**

In 2011 the Secretariat was able to finance and co-ordinate the following projects through EPI funding.

- Evaluation of riparian forests as guidelines and feeding areas in bat migration (Germany/Austria);
- The Conservation of vulnerable floodplain forests with the help of Pond Bat and Barbastelle (Hungary);
- Bats of Albania – from field work and monography to conservation and education (Albania);
- Bats of Bou Hedma National Park: Habitat use and conservation (Tunisia).

A number of further very promising project applications have been received in 2011 and 2012 awaiting final assessment by the EPI Selection Working Group.

### **Year of the Bat**

The “Year of the Bat 2011 – 2012” campaign has clearly dominated the Secretariat’s work in 2011.

It was initially envisaged that during 2011, EUROBATS would take the lead and using its established base in Europe, take the Campaign to a strong and healthy start. CMS was set to take over the second year when the Campaign was intended to go global. Unexpectedly, the initial response to the declaration of the YoB initiative was global. It became inevitably clear that from day one (i.e. 2011) the Campaign would be a global rather than regional, initiative.

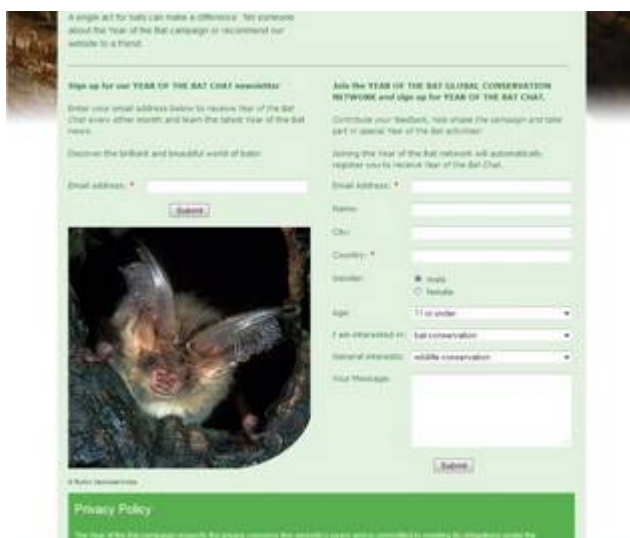
The first year of the Campaign was highly focused on the need to raise global awareness of the initiative and establish links and contacts within various Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), bat and or nature conservation groups and museums. This was done through three main platforms, which are: the Year of the Bat website, EUROBATS contacts and Focal Points (FP), electronic newsletter and lastly, through the use of Web 2.0 tools in particular, Facebook. After a starting base of a pool

of enthusiastic contacts were made, attention was shifted to the greater audience – the general public. Information material that is easily distributable, brief yet informative, essentially engaging and transcending the age and occupation barrier; YoB’s ticket to entice people to want to know more about bats, and ultimately, to positively impact bat conservation in whatever means possible to them. A series of promotional material, which included a two-sided flyer, eight sided brochure, Campaign logo stickers, a photo sticker sheet and twenty different postcards highlighting the diversity of bat species found globally.

Successful networking and the appreciation of the Campaign’s aims and goals had led to the collaboration of major bat conservation and nature conservation groups in the United States of America (USA), to welcome YoB as a contributor to the new long distance learning initiative. Given the runaway success of “Pollinator LIVE”, an online didactic platform aimed to raise awareness and educate individuals about the importance of nature’s own pollinators, the developers turned their attention to bats. With a new stronger network of active bat conservation projects and organizations, a decision was taken to launch “BatsLIVE!” A distance learning program aimed specifically at land managers and teachers, to be made available in English and Spanish free of charge. BatsLIVE! is due to be launched and take shape starting 2012.

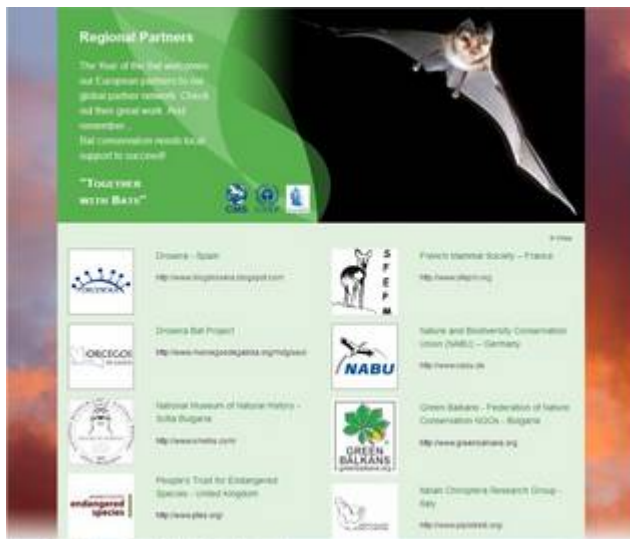
### **Online Campaign Growth and Outreach**

With the launch of a Campaign website and the initial push by EUROBATS Focal Points and NGOs, YoB was “online”. The website featured key information on bats and the initiative and importantly, provided a form (**Img. 1**) through which interested individuals could get in touch.



**Img. 1**

The idea of networking was set on establishing Campaign “Partners”. Various institutions from zoos, museums, bat and nature conservation organizations along with interested members of the public, soon took to contacting the Campaign through this form. The information they had sent, and in many cases, their e-mail domains, were looked at to determine if it was an opportunity to “Partner” with the corresponding institution. Partnering simply involved an exchange of logos and its display on both parties’ websites. This proved to be an effective method to spread the news of the Campaign and the YoB mailbox was fast filling up with enthusiasm and the will for positive change. Before long, the Partners page on the YoB website, started to take shape (**Img. 2**). There are currently 25 European, 6 North American, 9 South American, 8 Asian and 1 African Partners of YoB.



**Img. 2**

The electronic newsletter (**Img. 3**) aims to send out to interested individuals, snippets of activity news and events in order to allow them to keep abreast with the latest happenings. The newsletter is both emailed to subscribers and is also available online.



Img3

In November 2010, the power of Social Media was recognized and the need to exploit this channel was noted. This resulted in the setup of an Organization page on Facebook (Img. 4). A page that initially started with two “Friends” has since taken shape to boast 1800 “Friends” and counting! The Campaign Facebook page is alight with daily activity and has since its launch, taken a shape of its own. It is updated daily and significantly, other Facebook users have also taken up an active role on the Facebook page of the Campaign. The latest news, research advances, videos, pictures and events are all disseminated to the vast user group through this channel. Latest updates to the Facebook page monitoring systems show the extent of the Campaign’s outreach with more information on how many people are taking posts made on the Campaign Facebook page and reposting them onto their profiles. This method is a means by which the word of the Campaign catches on like wildfire, and ultimately, the campaign benefits.



**Img. 4**

**Public Awareness**

To expand the outreach of the Campaign, through both local activities and channels as well as to facilitate the work of Partners in their quest to boost the profile of the Campaign and bat conservation, various promotional material were designed to hand out free of charge. The first of the batch was a two sided flyer (**Img. 5**), the popularity and demand for which was so overwhelming that within weeks of the first print, decision to place orders for a substantial amount was being discussed. Also, soon afterwards, the flyer was translated and printed in nine different languages.



**Img. 5**

The eight sided brochure (**Img. 6**) was also soon designed and developed and printed in five languages. The brochure was to be handed out at events, museums, zoos and classrooms and consists of a little more detailed information on both bats and the need for the species conservation.



**Img. 6**

Additionally to these information materials, stickers to be handed out were also produced. The logo sticker was printed in five languages and a sheet of photo stickers was also developed and printed. The reception for these quick, attractive and very effective means of campaign promotion was very successful.

Following the initial round of two different postcards produced in the latter months of 2010, the underlying success and realization of potential encouraged the Campaign

organizers to select and print twenty different picture postcards to be given out individually or in sets of twenties. The selection of pictures were carefully undertaken to ensure that they presented to everyone, the vast array of bat species, their intricate beauties and to make them aware of the fact that they are present on all parts of the world except the Arctic, Antarctica and some islands of Oceania.

All promotional materials were prominently displayed on the website **Img. 7** and Partners were made aware of their presence so that they could place orders according to the events they were organizing.



**Img. 7**

### **Year of the Bat Events**

The campaign focused on encouraging Partners to organize and host activities and the Campaign contributed through the supply of promotional materials. The utmost effort was made to ensure that we delivered to our Partners and non-Partners, all or as much as possible of all that they had wanted. We also facilitated the inter-agency correspondence by putting different Partners in contact with others.

One of the requests placed to any new organization choosing to become a Partner was that they keep the Campaign updated regularly with news of upcoming events. As soon as the Campaign received news of events and also pictures and reports of past events, they were placed on the website (**Img. 8**).



**Img. 8**

In August, the Campaign had organized, with the help of the YoB Ambassadors and founding Partner Organizations, Bat Conservation Trust (BCT) and Bat Conservation International (BCI), a global photo competition. The successful culmination of the event is reflected on the EUROBATs website: [http://www.eurobats.org/YoB\\_photo\\_index.htm](http://www.eurobats.org/YoB_photo_index.htm)

### **Year of the Bat Mail**

The Year of the Bat mailbox with the address domain: [yearofthebat@eurobats.org](mailto:yearofthebat@eurobats.org) was set up to facilitate communication and ignite interest in bats. Every day, there are emails from interested people from all over the world expressing interest in getting involved, touching base with a bat expert for queries and general support for the initiative. The Mailbox needs to be manned daily as important news of events and potential new contacts emerge. Since the launch of the campaign almost 3.000 messages were received through this channel alone.

### **Campaign Achievements**

It would be a justified statement to make that the campaign has thus far, been an unprecedented success in the area of awareness raising for bats. From the simple form on a website and an established EUROBATs contact list, the campaign has attained voice and light globally. The scope of the campaign also is a measure of its achievement as it is not one where only bat experts, conservation groups and enthusiasts are involved, but a Campaign that has reached classrooms, girl and boy scouts, university lecture halls, children's magazines, print and digital newspapers, books, radio and television. If such a presence was not a sufficient measure of the successful spread, the sheer amount of printed promotional material that has been



shifted and sent out, speaks volumes. As far as an awareness raising campaign goes, good work has been done and established. However, there is significant more work to be done to build upon the existing framework and ensure a greater and frequent presence of the Year of the Bat in print and digital media.