

Agreement on the conservation of populations of European bats

National report of Austria

A. General Information

Non-Party Range State: Austria

Date of Report: February 2015

Period covered by report: January 2006 – February 2015

Competent Authorities: none. Austria consists of nine federal Laender, each of which implements EU-legislation in their own different nature protection laws.

Appointed Member of the Standing Committee: none

Voluntary Member of the Advisory Committee: Anna Nele Herdina, BatLife Österreich, c/o Säugetiersammlung, Naturhistorisches Museum Wien, Burgring 7, 1010 Wien, Austria

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B. Status of Bats within the Territory of the Non-Party Range State

1. Summary Details of Resident Species

There are 28 species of bats in Austria, the last additions were *Myotis alcathoe* (Spitzenberger 2008), *Myotis dascycneme* (Reiter et al. 2010), and *Tadarida teniotis* (Dobner 2010). The first Austrian breeding record of *Nyctalus noctula* has been procured in Burgenland (Spitzenberger 2007).

Miniopterus schreibersii is almost extinct, a massive population decline of *Rhinolophus ferrumequinum* in maternity roosts was recorded (Spitzenberger et al. 2010). *Pipistrellus kuhlii* and *Hypsugo savii* are extending their ranges rapidly. Numbers of individuals of *Myotis myotis* and *Myotis emarginatus* females in maternity colonies are increasing.

2. Status and Trends

The Austrian Red Data Book was published in 2005, in German, (Spitzenberger 2005), based on the book “Die Säugetierfauna Österreichs” (Spitzenberger 2002) which contains distribution maps and research results from 1970–1999.

3. Habitats and Roost Sites

Since 1990, monitoring of important nursery roosts in Burgenland was conducted by BatLife Österreich. Results of two surveys of bat occupancy of all public buildings in Burgenland between the 1990s and early 2000s were published (Spitzenberger & Weiss 2012). Volunteers were recruited and trained to look after bat colonies living in buildings and solve problems caused by bats (Spitzenberger 2010). BatLife Österreich cultivates a close cooperation with the diocese to ensure that refurbishment work in churches will not destroy roosts or harm bats.

Since 1973, monitoring of 20 important underground sites was conducted in Styria by volunteers in collaboration with Zoological Museum Joanneum and BatLife Österreich (Sackl et al. 2011). The population trend of *Rhinolophus hipposideros* in the cave Hermannshöhle in Lower Austria has been monitored since 1985 (Spitzenberger & Engelberger 2013).

Management plans were drafted for bat conservation in Natura 2000 sites of Burgenland based on mistnetting, acoustical surveys and roost counts (BatLife Österreich).

4. Data Collection

Raw data are compiled by scientists, museums, bat conservation organizations, and federal administrations of the nine Laender. At the moment, most of them are not available to the public.

Data used in Habitats Directive reporting (from reports, articles, personal comments etc.) are stored by Environment Agency Austria (Umweltbundesamt Wien)

C. Measures Taken to Implement Article III of the Agreement

Even though Austria is a Non-Party Range State, legislation in the nine Laender provide protection of bats and bat roosts according to some Articles of the Agreement.

5. Legal measures taken to prevent the deliberate capture, keeping or killing bats, including details of enforcement actions used to support such measures

Nine different laws in the nine federal Laender protect bats. All species of bats and their roosts are protected; it is forbidden to intentionally disturb, catch, take from the wild, transport, injure or kill bats, as well as to possess, acquire, or pass on bats or parts of them; any damage to bat roosts and resting places is forbidden. Additional regulations apply in areas protected under the EU Habitats directive, where it is forbidden to allow the degradation of habitats, and certain projects have to pass an environmental impact assessment. A special permit is necessary to keep bats for rehabilitation. The competent authorities to approve applications for this permit vary between federal Laender (see below). There is also legislation on animal welfare, stating that keeping wild animals with special requirements regarding their keeping conditions – like bats – is subject to registration, and minimum requirements have to be met.

Competent authorities for permit applications in each Land (compiled 2011):

Burgenland: local Bezirkshauptmannschaft or Magistrat (the local district administrative authority); if more than one district is involved, the application has to be submitted to the Amt der Burgenländischen Landesregierung (office of the provincial government), Abteilung 5: Hauptreferat für Natur- und Umweltschutz.

Carinthia: local Bezirkshauptmannschaft or Magistrat, each one if the permit is needed for the whole federal Land.

Lower Austria: Amt der Niederösterreichischen Landesregierung, RU5 - Abteilung Naturschutz.

Salzburg: outside of protected areas: local Bezirkshauptmannschaft or Magistrat; if more than one district is involved, the application has to be submitted to the Amt der Salzburger Landesregierung, Abteilung 13: Naturschutz. They will appoint one Bezirkshauptmannschaft to handle the application process for all of them. Within protected areas: Amt der Salzburger Landesregierung, Abteilung 13: Naturschutz.

Styria: local Bezirkshauptmannschaft or Magistrat, each one if the permit is needed for the whole federal Land.

Tyrol: local Bezirkshauptmannschaft or Magistrat; if more than one district is involved, the application has to be submitted to the Amt der Tiroler Landesregierung, Abteilung Umweltschutz. They will appoint one Bezirkshauptmannschaft to handle the application process for all of them.

Upper Austria: outside of protected areas: local Bezirkshauptmannschaft or Magistrat; if more than one district is involved, one Bezirkshauptmannschaft is handling the application process for all of them. Within protected areas: Amt der Oberösterreichischen Landesregierung, Abteilung Naturschutz.

Vienna: Magistrat der Stadt Wien, Magistratsabteilung 22 - Wiener Umweltschutzabteilung and MA 60 - Veterinäramt.

Vorarlberg: local Bezirkshauptmannschaft or Magistrat, each one if the permit is needed for the whole federal Land.

6. Sites identified and protected which are important to the conservation of bats

As of 2014, not enough Natura 2000 sites for bat species had been nominated and implemented by Austria. Therefore, the Commission launched a treaty infringement against Austria, and ordered to nominate further suitable sites by the end of 2015.

7. Activities carried out to promote the awareness of the importance of the conservation of bats

A comprehensive exhibition on bats was established in the castle of Lockenhaus, Burgenland. The exhibition itself and guided tours are provided in German and Hungarian. A webcam broadcasts live images from a Geoffroy's bat's colony to the exhibition. BatLife Österreich provided scientific guidance in curating the exhibition, training guides and organising regular events. – In Styria, a temporary exhibition on bat biology has been curated by BatLife Österreich and is shown in the castle Thannhausen.

BatLife Österreich lends travelling toolboxes focused on bat biology to all types of schools and helps to plan and implement individualised school projects.

Brochures on bats in Nature Parks in Burgenland and on bat biology and ecology accompanying the exhibition in Lockenhaus as well as on bats in churches of Burgenland were made available to the public. Two issues of BatNews (a regular newsletter) are sent to BatLife members each year and made available to the public on the website.

Emergence observations and bat talks for the general public and in combination with school projects are organised by BatLife Österreich and KFFÖ (Koordinationsstelle für Fledermausforschung und –schutz)

8. Responsible bodies, in accordance with Article III.5 of the Agreement, nominated for the provision of advice on bat conservation and management

The nine federal Laender nominated different persons.

9. Additional action undertaken to safeguard populations of bats

Protecting bats in buildings has been the main objective in founding BatLife Österreich. The organisation cultivates a close cooperation with the diocese to ensure that refurbishment work in churches will not destroy roosts or harm bats. Essential for the continuous use of the roost is the preservation of the established access to the roost. Furthermore, each year numerous colonies inhabiting private buildings are preserved by individual counselling of the owners.

KFFÖ runs Species Protection Programs (“Artenschutzprojekte”) in seven Laender which are not targeted at a particular species. They included monitoring of maternity colonies in Upper Austria, a survey of bats in Vienna and organising three meetings on bat ecology and protection (Reiter 2013). Initially, they were not only intended protect Annex IV species but also to replace protection for Annex II species under the Natura 2000 framework. Recently, however, KFFÖ suggested Natura 2000 sites for Austrian bat species.

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

Monitoring trends of breeding populations of bats in Burgenland and of hibernating bats in Styrian caves are ongoing projects conducted by BatLife Österreich.

D. Functioning of the Agreement

11. Measures taken to implement Resolutions adopted by Meetings of Parties

Even though Austria is a Non-Party Range State, several actions to protect bats were taken in the nine Laender which are in accordance to some Resolutions adopted by the Meeting of Parties.

Resolution 2.4. Transboundary Programme: Habitat Proposals

Data on important underground sites were submitted in 2014 to the database maintained by the secretariat by BatLife Österreich.

Resolution 4.3 Guidelines for the protection and Management of Important Underground Habitats

Guidelines are used in negotiations with owners and authorities to protect and manage underground hibernacula. Positive examples are the grilling of Arzgrube and removing the grill from Fledermauskluft in St Margarethen in Burgenland where an up-to-date entrance prevention was installed.

Resolution 4.5 Guidelines for the Use of Remedial Timber Treatment

Diocese Burgenland does not use poisonous timber treatments in lofts of churches any longer.

Resolution 5.2: Bat Rabies in Europe

No rabid bat was found in Austria yet, even though irregular tests have been done by the Austrian Agency for health and food safety.

Resolution 5.4: Monitoring Bats across Europe

Data on bats in Austrian underground sites have been sent to the secretariate by BatLife Österreich.

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