

AGREEMENT ON THE CONSERVATION OF BATS IN EUROPE (EUROBATS).

Third report on implementation of the Agreement in Georgia.

A. General Information

- *Name of non-party Range State:* Republic of Georgia.
- *Date of Report:* 17 July 2000.
- *Period Covered:* February 2000 - July 2000.
- *Competent Authority:* Institute of Zoology of Georgian Academy of Sciences, Ministry of the Environmental Protection.

B. Status of Bats within the Territory of the Party.

1. Summary details of resident species, by territory.

Situation similar to the last report.

2. Status and Trends.

No change. Status and population trends of most of bats occurring in Georgia are unknown. Two species' - *Pippistrellus kuhli* and *P. pippistrellus* are increasing their populations' number and range.

3. Habitats and Roost Sites

No change.

4. Threats

No change. The combination of the long crises of energy and budget has results that around of the human settlements on the plains almost all old trees are cut down. Also, increasing of tourism in the caves and old churches, and increasing of the refurbishment of old churches appeared now as new threat.

5. Data Collection

This year, for observation during our fieldwork, we use, unique in Georgia, ultrasound bat detector D-100, kindly given to us by Mr. Lars Pettersson. This gear considerably has increased our possibilities. We are very grateful for this considerable help.

At first, we did not have a key-book, based on the recorded sounds of bats, and audio cassettes with records of the bat sounds. The training "**The workshop for bat conservation experts training on work with Ultra Sonic Bat Detectors**" (The grant - GEO/KNIP0001, Dutch Royal Embassy on Ukraine and German contribution towards the implementation of EUROBATS transboundary programmes) was held on 11-17 of May 2000. Now, three Georgian experts has in own usage the detectors D-200, sound records and all necessary equipment, for the start of the successful work on bats in our country, on this stage of researches.

The workshop had brought also scientific results. Two new for Transcaucasia (and, in particular, for Georgia) species' of bats: the Pygmy pipistrelle bat (*Pipistrellus pygmaeus*) and Daubenton's bats (*Myotis daubentonii*) were found by H. Limpens during the training. For the first time, the bat fauna of the flood-plain forests on the river Iori was investigated.

All other observations are carried out due to the enthusiasm of the members of our group. For the fieldwork we used means obtained during fulfilment of the official duties and works' ordered by customers (e.g. ecological examinations).

Despite of this circumstance, in the spring and in the summer, we inspected 4 caves on the karst massif in vicinity of the village Urta (near to the town Zugdidi, in Western Georgia), and two times, in the April-May and July, all caves and ruins in the complex of David-Gareji caves monastery near city Rustavi (in Eastern Georgia).

- ÷ In the cave "Urta" we found 9 specimen of a Greater Horseshoe bat and a lot of faeces.
- ÷ Roosts of the Greater Horseshoe bat were found also in the 4 of 9 caves "Tetri Senakebi", the part of David-Gareji complex. In the July, A. Bukhnikashvili and J. Natradze had counted here about 950 - 1200 animals.
- ÷ They have found nursery colony of a Mouse-eared bat (*Myotis blithii*) in the other part of David-Gareji complex, in the cave N'17 of "Natlis Mtsemeli" monastery. Here they had seen around 600-700 adults and young bats.

During preparation to the workshop and after them were inspected flood-plain forest on Kura and Alazani rivers in eastern Georgia, "Ispana bogs" in Western Georgia (Ajara) and western part of Azerbaijan. Observations were done using bat-detectors (D-100 and D-200). Everywhere were found 3-4 common species: *Pipistrellus pipistrellus*, *Pipistrellus pygmaeus*, *Nyctalus noctula* and *Eptesicus serotinus*.

The periodic observation were continued in the settlement Akhaldaba, in the Borjomi region, and in neighbourhoods of village Vedzhini, Gurjaani region.

- ÷ The nursing colony and the wintering of a Lesser Horseshoe bat in Akhaldaba had shown small increase - 43 individuals were observed this year in the May.
- ÷ The number of animals in the summer colony of a Greater Horseshoe bat in the church in neighbourhoods of village Vedzhini is stably - about 200 individuals were observed by N. Tchankoshvili.

The compilation of the list of the caves, occupied by the bats, is in progress. The preparation for compilation of the list of churches and the other buildings, in which occur the bats, began.

One member of our group continues work on the PhD-thesis about the Georgian bats.

Data on bats in Georgia, which are collected in the last three decades, are shown in the 22 scientific articles, these mainly were issued in Russia. In the Mammals Collection of Institute of Zoology we have 159 specimens as skulls and skins, and 15 in formaldehyde. Also, in the Georgian State Museum are stored 490 bats specimens of the 20 species.

C. Measures Taken to Implement Article III of the Agreement

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

During period covered by this report, the situation with the ratification of the Agreement was some more successful than before.

At the 10th February 2000, Georgian Parliament has approved the ratification of the Bonn Convention (CMS), the "parent Convention" for our Agreement. Now we ask our authorities ratify the EUROBATs.

On periodical meetings with the Minister and leading staff of the Environmental Ministry, we have carried out a lobbying for a signing of the "The Agreement on the Conservation of Bats in Europe" (EUROBATs).

Because of hard economic state of affairs (combination of the long crises of energy and budget) and the long processes of the forming of the new Government after the parliament elections, it was problematically to hope on the ratification of the Agreement in this year. Up to the March, Georgia had not the approved State Budget for 2000th year, and now a curtailment (a sequestration) of the State budget is under discussing. And what is more, in the State Budget of Georgia, the paragraph of money dedicated to spend for the Nature Conservation or other Environmental aims, is absent. Therefore, the Ministry have no means for the full implementation of Agreement and also for all other activities in this field. We should ask the Secretariat and all colleagues' - to help us to make known to the Georgian authorities, that a certain percent of the gross revenue of Country must be dedicated for the aims of Nature Conservation. It might be made via the high officers of World Bank, EC or other financial and political organisations, which have influence at Georgian Government and Parliament.

Despite of that, the director of NGO "NACRES" ("The Noah's Ark Centre for Recovery of Endangered Species") Dr. Zurab Gureilidze, had found possibilities to spend money for the preparation all documents needed for the approval this agreement in the parliament. So now, ratification of the "Agreement on the Conservation of Bats in Europe (Eurobats)" should be under consideration on the autumn session of the Georgian parliament.

There are 29 species of Bats (order *Chiroptera*) occurring in Georgia. 7 species of bat are included in the "Red Data Book of Georgia" (1982). These are *Rhynolophus mehelyi*, *Myotis bechesteini*, *M. emarginatus*, *Barbastella barbastellus*, *Nyctalus leisleri*, *N. lasiopterus* and *Miniopterus schreibersi*. The last two species and *Rhynolophus euriale* are included in the "Red Data Book of the USSR" (second edition 1984). A revision of the Georgian Red Data Book is expected in the nearest years, this work is in progress.

The information on bats, living in Georgia is very scarce. All bats are under the protection of Bonn Convention on Migratory Species of Wild Animals. However, migration routes and shelters (roosts) of wintering species are still unknown.

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

Two sites are identified as an important to the conservation of bats, but not yet protected. First site - the karst-massif in western Georgia between Zugdidi and

Kutaisi, second site - David Garedji caves-monastery complex near Rustavi, in eastern Georgia. No sites are protected.

8. Considerations given to habitats which are important to bats.

No considerations are given to the habitats important to bats.

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

No change. Private conversations and lectures for school children's and students. One popular-science article is published lately by A. Bukhnikashvili. This article dedicated to conservation of small mammals, and, in particulars, bats. It is issued in the WWF-Georgia magazine "Garemo da Ganvitareba" (Environment and Development) N'2 (22), pages11-15.

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

Should be specified after ratification of the Agreement.

11. Additional action undertaken to safeguard populations of bats.

Mr. Alexander Bukhnikashvili has conducted negotiations with high official of a Patriarchy of the Georgian Orthodox Church about participation of the zoologists in preparation of the projects of restoration of churches. We undertook that after fact that priests had killed thousands of bats in Mtskheta Cathedral.

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

a) Programmes in progress:

Preparation of the catalogue of the caves in which exist the bats' colonies.

b) Programmes completed:

"The workshop for bat conservation experts training on work with Ultra Sonic Bat Detectors" within the framework of the PROGRAM "Bat conservation expert training and data collection in Southeast Europe".(A German contribution towards the implementation of EUROBATS transboundary programmes). The grant GEO/KNIP0001, given by the Dutch Royal Embassy on Ukraine, through the Dutch Royal Consulate in Georgia of May 4 2000. The addressee of the Grant Andrei Kandaurov, member of the Advisory Committee of the EUROBATS, scientific researcher of the Institute of zoology Academy of Sciences of Georgia and Union of the field-workers "Campester".

Our young amateur, Nickoloz Tchankoshvili has completed the program "The present situation of Bats in Georgia - tracks of the Past". This program was granted by the fund "Open Society - Georgia Foundation" (total budget - 400 US\$).

c) Programmes begun:

The project: "Bat's colonies and stopover sites in the karst caves of Eastern Black Sea Coast (Western Transcaucasia)" is prepared as a part of the EUROBATS project proposal "Conservation strategies for underground habitats, forested and mountain areas along the flyway of bats in Eastern and South-Eastern Europe" with UNEP/GEF funding. The author of the application/organisation: Andrei Kandaurov/ the Union of the field-workers - "Campester" and Institute of Zoology, GAS.

The proposal: "Save the bat colonies in the karst caves of Western Transcaucasia" is prepared on request of WWF-Georgia office and is approved as one of priorities in the biological diversity conservation of the Caucasus. The authors application/organisation: Andrei Kandaurov and Alexander Bukhnikashvili, the Union of the field-workers - "Campester" and Institute of Zoology, GAS.

13. Considerations begin given to the potential effects of pesticides on bats, and efforts to replace timber treatment chemicals, which are highly toxic to bats.

No considerations are given.

D. Functioning of the Agreement.

Co-operation with other Range States.

On the 4th Meeting of the Advisory Committee to EUROBATS, in Stockholm, the group of the representatives of countries of the Black Sea Coast has decided to offer the project of study of migrations of bats on the western and east coast of the Black Sea. A working title of this project is "Transregional relations between the bat faunas of the countries along the Black Sea Coast and conservation of bats diversity". The realisation of this project could stimulate work on a research and protection of bats and would receive a positive resonance in our countries. In period between Meetings of the Advisory Committee we had discussed the ideas with the co-ordinator of this work from Bulgaria Dr. Rumiana Pandurska.

The training on ultrasonic bat-detectors was carried out together with the colleagues from Azerbaijan. This workshop promoted development of collaborations between the experts of the south Caucasian countries. The participants of a Workshop have discussed problems arising in the conservation of the biological diversity of bats in their countries. On the workshop, and one day later, the representatives of Georgia, Azerbaijan and Armenia decided to organise the Regional Transcaucasian group of study and conservation of bats. The Group unites zoologists and enthusiasts of conservation and research of bats from these three States. A. Kandaurov is chosen as the co-ordinator on the first term. We have good relations with Russian colleagues and receive the journal "Plecotus" from Russia.

We are ready for co-operation with other Range States.

E. Other information - Implementation of Resolutions 4, 5 and 8 of the 2nd MOP

Resolution n# 4

A data collection for preparation of database about roosts is begun.

Resolution n# 5

Status of migratory patterns of the cave-dwelling species is still not insufficient known.

Andrei S. Kandaurov. Georgia.

July 17 2000.