

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

The report on implementation of the Agreement in Georgia.

A. General Information

- *Name of non-party Range State:* Republic of Georgia.
- *Date of Report:* 16 March 2001.
- *Period Covered:* February 2000 - March 2001.
- *Competent Authority:* Ministry of the Environment and Natural Resources and Institute of Zoology of Georgian Academy of Sciences.

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

1. Summary details of resident species, by territory.

Situation is similar to the last report. 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 *Rhinolophus mehelyi*, *Myotis bechesteini*, *M. emarginatus*, *Barbastella barbastellus*, *Nyctalus leisleri*, *N. lasiopterus* and *Miniopterus schreibersi*. The last two species and *Rhinolophus euriale* are included in the "Red Data Book of the USSR" (second edition 1984). 4 species: *R. euriale*, *R. hipposideros*, *B. barbastellus* and *M. emarginatus*, are included in the "IUCN Red Data Book" (1997).

All bats are under the protection of Bonn Convention (CMS), that is signed at 10 February 2000th. However, migration routes and shelters (roosts) of wintering species are still in need of investigation.

2. Status and Trends.

No change. Status and population trends of most of bats occurring in Georgia are unknown. Two species' - *Pipistrellus kuhli* and *P. pipistrellus* are increasing their populations' number and range. The Pygmy pipistrelle bat (*Pipistrellus pygmaeus*) and Daubenton's bats (*Myotis daubentonii*) were found on Georgian territory during the training in May 2000.

3. Habitats and Roost Sites

No change. During this period we observed around 40 caves and 2 old mines, found 22 new roosts.

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 all old trees are felled down. Also, increasing of tourism in the caves and old churches, and increasing of the refurbishment of old churches appeared now as new threat. No pesticides are used in timber treatment, and very seldom pesticides are used in agriculture.

5. Data Collection

In the first half of this year, we have used, for observation during our fieldwork, only ultrasound bat detector D-100, kindly given to us by Mr. Lars Pettersson. This gear considerably has increased our possibilities. We all are very grateful for this important help.

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 have in own usage the detectors D-200 and one postgraduate has D-220. They all has sound records and all necessary equipment, for the 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.

In the spring and in the summer of 2000th, we inspected 4 caves on the karst massif in vicinity of the village Urta (near to the town Zugdidi, in Western Georgia). In February 2001st, Mr. Bukhnikashvili and Mr. Natradze inspected monastery cave complexes in Iori river valley (down stream) – Kalaghiri, Didi Kvabebi, Sabereebi. In March 2001st they inspected karst caves in vicinity of Chiatura town - Devebis mgvime, Tsilto, Sachinkias mgvime, Sabias mgvime, Sadatvias, Kvabkoris mgvime and two old mines. Also, we inspected all caves and ruins in the complex of David-Gareji caves monastery near city Rustavi (in Eastern Georgia), three times - in the April-May and July of 2000th and in February of 2001st.

- ÷ 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.
- ÷ In Tsilto and Sachinkias mgvime were found hibernacula of *Rhinolophus euryale* 2 and 3 individuals.
- ÷ In Sachinkias mgvime hibernacula of *Miniopterus schreibersi* –3 individuals.
- ÷ The hibernacula of *Rhinolophus ferrumequinum* and *Rh. hipposideros* are found in all caves in Chiatyra district, listed above.

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, we found three-four common species': *Pipistrellus pipistrellus*, *Pipistrellus pygmaeus*, *Nyctalus noctula* and *Eptesicus serotinus*.

The periodic observations 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.

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

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 2000th year. Up to the March, Georgia had not the approved State Budget for 2000th year and time to time a curtailment (a sequestration) of the State budget was 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 has 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.

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.

The ratification of the "Agreement on the Conservation of Bats in Europe (Eurobats)" by the Georgian parliament first were planned to be done on the autumn session of the 2000 year, next it was planned on the spring session of the 2001st year. At last, 9 of March 2001st, the Parliament had adopted ratification of all Agreements under the Bonn Convention (CMS), such as AEWA and ACCOBAMS, but had rejected the ratification of EUROBATS without any argumentation, only because the name of the Agreement contains the word – bat. This fact reflects the attitude to the bats in our community and also, the level of knowledge in the field of the ecology and nature conservation of our parliamentarians.

We had talk with Minister of Environment and Nature Resources - madam Nino Chkhobadze. The Minister has assured me that she will submit the EUROBATS for ratification of the Parliament once again on the autumn session of the 2001st year. But, we need assistance. It would be very good, if an authoritative expert in bat conservation will be able to read a lecture in this field for the Georgian Parliament and local scientists before middle of September. The Ministry is ready to organise such lectures, but can not pay for that. Also it will be very good if Secretariat of EUROBATS or/and CMS will inform the Parliament of their attitude to the fact of the rejecting of the Agreement.

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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 and neighbouring Iori tableland, in eastern Georgia. No sites are protected today. The preparation for creating a large protected area is begun on the Iori tableland.

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.

- ÷ 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), 2000, pages11-15.
- ÷ Posters "European bat Night", received from Germany, distributed among governmental Nature Protecting bodies, NGOs, in University.
- ÷ Small groups of bat experts and amateurs of wild nature participated in collective observation on bats in frame of European Bat Night in Tbilisi and Rustavi, at the end of September 2000.
- ÷ In the brochure "Field-guide of terrestrial vertebrates' of Borjom-Kharagauli National Park" are described 13 species' of bats. This brochure is in preparation in WWF-Georgia office with a support of German Government.
- ÷ Preparation for printing 7 leaflets granted by Belgium and Germany is begun.

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.
- ÷ The joint Azerbaijanian-Georgian project (on study of consequences of construction of oil pipelines in these countries for a fauna of mammalian), prepared during the workshop. This project is supported by ISAR (US AID) fund.

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. During last two years no pesticides are used in timber treatment. But we need to prepare to the future, when that will become a possible.

D. Functioning of the Agreement.

14. Co-operation with other Range States.

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.

After the past summer and autumn observation in the field, we see that additional training in work with the bat detector will be very useful for us. I know that our Armenian colleagues are in need of training, also. If it could be possible, we want to take participation in the training, which will be held in Armenia, our closest neighbour.

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

15. Measures taken to implement Resolutions adopted by Meeting of Parties.

Resolution 2.1 – Consistent Monitoring Methodologies.

This point has not been implemented yet.

Resolution 2.4 Transboundary Programme: Habitat Proposals.

See points 3, 5, 7, 12a and 12b of this Report.

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Resolution 2.5 – Geographical Scope of the Agreement.

This point has not been implemented yet.

Resolution 2.7 and 3.3 –Format of National Reports.

I hope, the report have been prepared according to the format.

Resolution 2.8 and 3.8 – On the implementation of the conservation and management plan

An effort to implementation the Article III of the Agreement has been taken. See point 6 and others of this report.

Resolution 3.5 – International Year of the Bat

Institute of Zoology, Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources and NGO "Campester" will take effort to attract public attention on bat conservation problem.

Resolution 3.7 – Amendment of the Agreement.

This point has not been implemented yet. See point 6 of this Report.

Andrei S. Kandaurov. Georgia. 2001-03-12