

**AGREEMENT ON THE CONSERVATION OF  
POPULATIONS OF BATS IN EUROPE  
[EUROBATS]**

**NATIONAL REPORT**

Ireland  
2004 - 2005

**A. General Information**

- Name of party - Ireland
- Date of Report - 8 March 2004
- Period Covered - May 2004 – March 2005
- Competent Authority - National Parks and Wildlife Service  
Department of Environment, Heritage and Local  
Government  
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Ireland
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- Nominated member to  
the Advisory Committee - Dr Ferdia Marnell

## **B. Status of Bats Within the Territory of the Party**

### **1 Summary Details of Resident Species**

The eight species of bat found in Ireland are:

- (a) Pipistrelle - *Pipistrellus pipistrellus*
- (b) - *P. pygmaeus*
- (c) Brown Long-eared Bat – *Plecotus auritus*
- (d) Leisler’s Bat – *Nyctalus leisleri*
- (e) Whiskered Bat – *Myotis mystacinus*
- (f) Daubenton’s Bat – *Myotis daubentoni*
- (g) Natterer’s Bat – *Myotis nattereri*
- (h) Lesser Horseshoe Bat – *Rhinolophus hipposideros*

### **2 Status and Trends**

Eight species of bat have now been confirmed for Ireland, the most recent being the Soprano pipistrelle (55 kHz). A recent record of a dead Brandt’s bat has been confirmed but there have been no confirmed records of live animals. The Nathusius’ Pipistrelle is known from Northern Ireland and has been recorded by bat detector in a few localities in the south, but it has not yet been confirmed breeding in the Republic.

### **3 Habitat and Roost Sites**

For most species repeat site visits have been carried out at irregular intervals. These data suggest that over the past ten to twenty years population trends appear to be stable or upwards.

An ongoing monitoring programme for the lesser horseshoe bat focuses on maternity and hibernation roosts throughout the species range in Ireland. Recent estimate suggests that over 60% of the national population of lesser horseshoe bat is protected within Special Areas of Conservation (SACs).

### **4 Threats**

The main threats to bats in Ireland come from loss of foraging habitat, loss of roosting sites, disruption of commuting routes, pollution and use of harmful chemicals. The use of insecticides and pesticides and agricultural intensification may be reducing prey abundance generally, although there is also some evidence to show that some species rely in winter on insects associated with cattle dung.

Hedgerow removal and maintenance may be reducing the connectivity in the landscape so essential to bats. These issues are being addressed through national legislation [Wildlife Amendment Act, 2000] and the Rural Environmental Protection Scheme, an agri-environmental measure administered by the Department of Agriculture.

The National Biodiversity Plan places emphasis on wider countryside conservation (outside of protected areas) and makes specific reference to the protection of hedgerows. It also looks to the introduction of beneficial environmental management practices such as the cessation in the use of herbicides by Local Authorities and other relevant bodies.

## **5 Data collection, analysis, interpretation and dissemination**

Data collection is ongoing. Standardised recording forms and a centralised database for bat roost information are being developed. These will greatly facilitate the analysis, interpretation and dissemination of bat data. NPWS commissioned surveys of foraging areas at a number of lesser horseshoe roosts during the summer of 2004 and diet analysis is underway at two winter roosts of the same species.

There has been a recent publication on the status of the lesser horseshoe bat in Ireland.: Kelleher C. (2004) *Irish Naturalists Journal* 27: 387 – 392.

Post-graduate bat research is being carried out at a number of Irish universities, notably at the National University of Ireland, Galway [the location for the 10<sup>th</sup> EBRS later this year].

Following recent concern about rabies and bats, a university team, commissioned by the Department of Agriculture undertook a survey for rabies in Daubenton's bats. The survey work took place at a number of riverine locations in the south of the country during the summer of 2004. Tissue and saliva samples were sent to the veterinary labs in Weymouth, England for analysis. Final results are still awaited from these tests, but it has already been decided to extend the sampling programme in 2005 and a survey design is being developed jointly by the Department of Agriculture and the National Parks and Wildlife Service. There has been no record of any form of rabies in Ireland for over 100 years.

## **C Measures Taken to Implement Article III of the Agreement**

### **6 Legal Measures**

All bats in Ireland are protected under the Wildlife Acts [1976 and 2000] which make it an offence to deliberately kill or injure any bat species or to damage its roosts. This act is policed throughout the country by Conservation Rangers from the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) of the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government.

Licences are issued each year under the Wildlife Acts to facilitate bat research and bat surveys. Approximately 12 - 15 such licences are each year e.g. to undertake mist netting or gather biopsy samples for rabies testing

## **7 Sites identified and protected**

Many sites have been identified and protected, grilles have been put in place, roofs repaired and hibernacula built in some cases. NPWS has an active programme of repairing/restoring lesser horseshoe roosts within SACs. The Vincent Wildlife Trust (VWT) employs a full-time field officer in Ireland and additional staff are employed by them on short contracts to conduct intensive surveys to locate new lesser horseshoe roosts. The VWT continues to acquire and manage vulnerable maternity roosts of the lesser horseshoe.

## **8 Consideration given to important bat habitats.**

Habitats associated with important roosts and vulnerable species such as lesser horseshoe bats continue to be identified - see B. 5 above. Many of these have been designated as SACs and others are proposed as Natural Heritage Areas (under national legislation) – see B.3.

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

An ongoing educational and awareness programme is being carried out by Conservation Rangers throughout the country, which included visits to schools and use of the media to promote public awareness. Bat training courses and other local events have also been organised by NPWS staff to promote bat awareness. Several events were organised by NPWS staff and local bat groups around the country for European Bat Night in 2004.

The 10<sup>th</sup> European Bat Research Symposium takes place in Galway, Ireland from 20-26 August 2005 and preparations are well underway to ensure that this is a successful and constructive meeting. The symposium will be preceded by a Bat Workshop in Killarney National Park. More details on [www.ebrs10.com](http://www.ebrs10.com) also [www.nuigalway.ie](http://www.nuigalway.ie)

The new national bat NGO [Bat Conservation Ireland] is continuing to develop and is working on a number of projects with NPWS [see [www.batconservationireland.org](http://www.batconservationireland.org)].

## **10 Responsible bodies nominated for the provision of advice on bat conservation and management.**

NPWS of the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government is the body responsible for the provision of advice on bat conservation and management. The Heritage Council, a statutory body, has funded the production of a booklet on the conservation and management requirements of all bat species in Ireland. Local authority Heritage Officers may also provide advice at a county level and are involved in local bat projects.

## **11 Additional action undertaken to safeguard populations of bats.**

NPWS maintains a close working relationship with other government agencies and with non-governmental organisations involved in bat conservation, in particular the VWT and BCI. NPWS in partnership with VWT has repaired sites and undertaken surveys and site monitoring.

The Heritage Council continues to fund bat surveys for those heritage buildings likely to contain bats where they intend grant-aiding renovation works.

## **12 Recent and ongoing programmes relating to conservation and management of bats.**

An annual programme of monitoring the summer and winter roosts of the lesser horseshoe bat continues.

The pilot scheme of countryside monitoring (based on car transects) for bats in Ireland continued in 2004. The scheme, which is co-ordinated by BCI and co-funded by the Heritage Council and NPWS, took place at 17 locations in July and August 2004. Results show that only 3 species of bats (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus*, *Pipistrellus pygmaeus* and *Nyctalus leisleri*) are encountered at sufficiently frequent intervals to allow monitoring using this technique. The scheme is being expanded to 20 locations in 2005 with the Heritage Council and NPWS continuing as co-sponsors.

## **13 Consideration being given to effects of pesticides on bats.**

Pest control agencies have been contacted so that bats will not be harmed during their operations.

## **D Functioning of Agreement**

### **14 Co-operation with other Range States**

Ireland is co-operating with other Range States and with other Member States of the EU in research and conservation matters. In particular, a Eurobats Intersessional Working Group on overground roosts, convened by Dr Ferdia Marnell, involves co-operation with bat experts in the UK, Italy, Lithuania, Slovakia, Croatia and Slovenia.

### **15 Measures taken to implement MoP Resolutions**

#### *Resolution 2.2 Database of Monitoring Results*

Details of monitoring programmes underway in Ireland have been forwarded to the relevant Working Group.

*Resolution 2.4 Transboundary Programme – underground habitats*

Underground habitats are particularly important for the lesser horseshoe bat in Ireland. A database collating all available data for this species has recently been compiled and the relevant underground information has been forwarded to the Working Group on underground habitats.

*Resolution 3.8 Foraging habitats*

Survey work to identify foraging habitats was completed during 2004 at 6 lesser horseshoe bat summer roosts. Diet analysis is ongoing at two winter roosts to help determine foraging habitats. F. Marnell is part of the IWG addressing this issue.

*Resolution 4.4 (2.4) Transboundary programme – forest practises*

German leaflet on forestry management for bats forwarded to Irish forestry service (Coillte) who have modified it for the Irish situation and circulated it to their forestry workers.

*Resolution 4.7 Wind turbines and bat populations*

Ireland have responded to the questionnaire circulated by the IWG working on this issue.

*Resolution 4.9 Protection of non-underground roosts*

F. Marnell convenes the IWG set up at AC10 to address this resolution.

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