

## **AGREEMENT ON THE CONSERVATION OF BATS IN EUROPE**

### **Report on the implementation of the Agreement in ITALY 2008**

#### **A. General Information**

Party Range: ITALY

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Period Covered: 2007-2008

Competent Authority for the Agreement: Arch. Pierluigi Fiorentino, *Ministry of Environment, Land and Sea Protection (Ministero dell'Ambiente e della Tutela del Territorio e del Mare, MATTM)*

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#### **B. Status of Bats within the Territory of Italy**

##### *1. Summary details of resident Species*

A presentation of the Italian bat fauna is provided in the 2004-2006 report. Although no changes are recorded, ongoing research is examining the taxonomic status of some groups which have revealed the existence of cryptic species in other areas of Europe.

The book "Guideline for bat monitoring", recently (2007) translated into English and edited by the Environmental Ministry (hereafter abbreviated as **MATTM**), the National Institute for Wildlife Management (**INFS**) and Gruppo Italiano Ricerca Chiroteri (the Italian Chiroptera Research Group, **GIRC**), offers an updated picture of bat distribution in Italy (species occurrence is reported on a regional scale).

Besides, information on bats in Italy may be obtained from the new EUROBATS pages of the Italian Environment Ministry website, also available in English:

[www.minambiente.it](http://www.minambiente.it) (from the homepage, access the EUROBATS pages through the "Fauna" link, or directly: [http://87.241.41.49/index.php?id\\_sezione=2659](http://87.241.41.49/index.php?id_sezione=2659))

The GIRC website ([www.pipistrelli.org](http://www.pipistrelli.org)) also offers information on bats in Italy.

## *2. Status and trends*

In general, an ever growing attention is being paid towards the issue of bat conservation, and the number of projects aimed to assess species occurrence, roost location and habitat preferences in the many protected areas of Italy has increased contributing to clarify the status and trends of bat populations.

The Environment Ministry has funded an assessment of mammal status in the country to prepare a national Red List. Ongoing work has so far led to a *draft* text which for bats was implemented thanks to the scientific advice of GIRC. Although the data available on bats in Italy are not always sufficient to provide a detailed status assessment, the expert advice proved crucial to obtain a state-of-the-art picture and estimate trends in the availability of foraging and roosting habitats. It is hoped that the validation procedure of this work will end soon and lead to the release an official version of the list.

## *3. Habitats and Roost Sites*

A growing number of sites is being discovered thanks to the increased research effort recorded in many areas of the country, especially within protected areas which in several cases have encouraged and funded research.

## *4. Threats*

The threats which put at risk bats in the country are briefly outlined in the 2004-2006 report. Especially concerning are those involving roost destruction or alteration.

Although their impact is still worrying, it is hoped that the nice growth in conservation initiatives recorded at different scales, from local to national, will ameliorate the preservation status of bat populations. Further information is provided within this report in the relevant sections.

## *5. Data Collection, analysis, interpretation and dissemination*

Some issues relevant to this point are covered elsewhere in the report (points 1-4, and 6). We remark the development of webpages devoted to EUROBATs implementation in Italy and the translation into English of the Bat Monitoring Guidelines (point 1 of the report), both effective means for dissemination of knowledge on bat biology, species occurrence and conservation ecology.

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

### *6. Legal measures taken to protect bats, including enforcement action*

#### 6a. Advances in the protection of bats in buildings

MATTM funded a major project on bat conservation covering two issues, one concerning bat conservation in buildings, the other – more relevant to the implications for conservation of research – given by bat banding. The project had strong implications to implement the legal framework on bat conservation, its aims and scopes fully responding to the objectives set in the art III of EUROBATS agreement and relevant resolutions. The project was coordinated by the University of Insubria and relied on the crucial participation of GIRC specialists from different areas and institutions of the country.

It is mentioned here since it led to the production of official documents intended to provide guidelines for the management of bats in buildings and establish procedures for the authorization and recording of banding. Even more importantly, the project received a crucial help from the *Ministero per i Beni e le Attività Culturali (MIBAC)*, i.e. the Italian Ministry responsible for art and culture. A chief part of the work focused on conservation of bats in buildings, special attention being paid to the issue of colonies roosting in monumental buildings belonging to the national heritage.

Activities undertaken included sending questionnaires to local authorities managing monumental buildings to collect information on bat occurrence, as well as selecting several case studies to illustrate best practice examples and ensure long-term persistence of bat colonies at such sites. The work led to an official document offering **guidelines for the conservation of bats in buildings**, including detailed information and decision support tools that will be most useful to those who are responsible, at different levels, for the management of buildings where bats roost. The text will be soon published by the Ministry and made freely available to stakeholders.

In this way, an unprecedented goal was achieved, i.e. both **MATTM and MIBAC signed an agreement** establishing their cooperation in preserving bat colonies in buildings. The above mentioned guidelines are thus adopted as the official tool that local authorities will use in the management of historical buildings where bat colonies roost.

#### 6b. Regulation of bat banding

A second main activity funded by MATTM concerned the development of actions dealing with bat banding, from setting the criteria to issue permits to creating an

effective system for storing data. In the past, this activity had received little attention and was not clearly regulated. In 2007, a document illustrating the criteria for evaluating proposals on bat banding as well as the best procedures for banding has been prepared and presented on the occasion of a workshop held in Florence at the Natural History Museum.

By standardising criteria for banding and developing a bat banding database accessible via the Internet, there will also be more space to implement international cooperation between bat specialists analysing phenomena like long-distance dispersal or migration.

The deliverables obtained included a **technical manual on bat banding, a bat banding database, and a “decision support system” software package** assisting officers in charge of issuing bat banding permits. This sets the necessary background for a better planned and managed banding activity.

#### *7. Sites identified and protected which are important to bat conservation*

A considerably large number of new roosts have been discovered thanks to ongoing research carried out in several areas of the country. In many cases, roosts were discovered in parks where sufficient protection may be achieved, but site preservation outside protected areas is often still a difficult issue.

#### *8. Consideration given to habitats which are important to bats*

A main point on the Ministry agenda is given by the development of an Action Plan for bats, whose feasibility is currently being discussed, which would certainly remark the importance of bat habitats. Please also see points 6, 7 of this report for other relevant issues.

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

Dissemination activities carried out by GIRC as well as by protected areas or single bat researchers/enthusiasts have the main scope of disseminate information on the importance of conserving bats through several initiatives. “Bat nights” and talks organized in different parts of the country attract an ever growing number of participants as well as attention from the media. Besides the above-mentioned new EUROBATS webpages implemented by the Ministry and the volume bat conservation in buildings (to be printed soon), a user-friendly booklet on conservation of bats in

buildings (in Italian) was prepared within the bats-in-buildings project funded by MATTM: the pdf version is freely available from the link [http://www2.minambiente.it/pdf\\_www2/dpn/pubblicazioni/pipistrelli\\_intorno\\_noi.pdf](http://www2.minambiente.it/pdf_www2/dpn/pubblicazioni/pipistrelli_intorno_noi.pdf)

The outcomes of the above project were also presented on the MIBAC premises in Rome on 22<sup>nd</sup> February, 2008. Stakeholder representatives were invited to attend the workshop, which greatly benefited from the kind participation of Prof Jorge Palmerim (Lisbon University) who delivered a high-profile talk on bat conservation in buildings.

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

No changes since last report

*11. Considerations being given to the potential effects of pesticides on bats, and their food sources and efforts to replace timber treatment chemical, which are highly toxic to bats*

No changes since last report

#### **D. Functioning of the Agreement**

*12. Cooperation with other Range States*

Italy is co-operating with other Range States and with other Member States of the EU in research and conservation, and several international collaborations between Italian researchers and those from other EU countries are in progress. Participation into the Pan European Bat Monitoring through the involvement of GIRC members is being considered.