

AGREEMENT ON THE CONSERVATION OF BATS IN ROMANIA

A. General information:

- *Name of Party:* Romania
- *Date of Report:* March 2002
- *Period covered:* March 2001 – March 2002
- *Competent Authority:* Romanian Ministry of Waters and Environment – Directorate of Biodiversity Protection and Conservation, protected Areas, Monuments of Nature, Director **Adriana Baz**.
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- *Appointed member of the Advisory Committee:* Dumitru Murariu

B. Status of Bats within the Territory of Romania

1. Summary details of resident species:

Comparing with previous Romanian Report it can be stated that in Romanian fauna there are 30 bat species. *Pipistrellus kuhlii* and *P. pygmaeus* identified by Mr. Herman Limpens, in 2000, were later reported by different other Romanian chiropterologists. So that, these species are not only in western part of the country (Cefa – Bihor Co., where they were firstly identified), but also in the Piatra Craiului Natural Park - Southern Carpathians.

2. Status and trends:

Increasing interest in knowing better the status and trends of bat populations, out of the idea mentioned in the last report, led to some new, concrete aspects:

- In august 2001, the reporter visited Pestera Liliecilor = Bats Cave, on the right shore of the Caras river – Mehedinti Co., about 1 – 1,5 km east from the Carasova locality. From this cave, the former Romanian chrioptelogs (30 years ago) mentioned a large colony (about 5000 mixed individuals) with *Miniopterus schreibersii* as a dominant species and less individuals of *Rhinolophus ferrumequinum*. Today (6 – 15 August 2001) this cave is completely free of bats because peoples (especially young ones) use to enter there, remaining over night, visiting rooms and being noisy. But the most disturbant activity is the fire in the cave, bats being forced to leave the roost.

- Unfortunately, this situation is not isolated. Different other chiropterologists (e.g. Victor Gheorghiu in verbis) found similar situations in the Limanu Cave – Dobroudjea in South-Eastern part of Romania. In the first decade of December, there were burned straws and maize stalks, just at the entrance of the cave. The hibernating bat colony moved from one room to another one (deeper), but there were spread out into small groups, still agitated on December 20th 2001.

- In Pestera Liliecilor = Bats Cave from Dobroudjea the largest colony of *Rhinolophus mehelyi* from Romania was destroyed. In the same colony there were individuals of *Myotis myotis*, *M. blythii*, *M. mystacinus* and *Plecotus auritus*. Because young people used to enter in the cave with torches and thrown with stones and snow balls in the colony of bats, today there are only several individuals of *Miniopterus schreibersii* mixed with few *Rhinolophus mehelyi* but no individual of the additional species mentioned above.

- The same children's play, throwing stones in bats, happened in Isverna Cave – Mehedinti Co., as well as in Fusteica Cave – Gorj Co.

- In front of the Cave Podul lui Dumnezeu = God's Garret – Mehedinti Co. outer covers of the wheels were burned and the dense smoke made, determined bats from inside to move away.

- On the other side, trying to control the entrance of noisy tourists in the caves, people with best intentions set compact gates, without appropriate spaces to allow the entrance and exit of bats, as in Topolnita Cave – Mehedinti Co. and Tausoarele Cave – in Western Carpathians.

These unpleasant but real aspects are enough to understand the status and trend of the bat species, but also to mention the need and to underline the importance of any project of study and education, finalizing with practical measures to protect bats in Romania.

One good thing is the existence of at least six Bat Detectors for identifying bat species all over the country.

The second one – the best one - is the approval of a LIFE project, starting with December 2001, to protect Bats from the caves of South-Western part of Romania. This programme is supervised by Dr. Abigail Entwistle from the Fauna and Flora International and co-ordinated by Green Cross (Ms. Cristiana Pasca) from Romania.

For sure, these new programmes will be finalized with concrete measures to protect roosts on one side and bat species – on the other side, because the trends are clear toward the decreasing of populations in almost all species.

3. Habitat and roost sites

Because not all bat species from the Romanian fauna are using only caves as their roosts, some new projects should be focused to the tree hollows in forests and in parks. There are some large localities, with parks and isolated old trees, where different species of bats find their roosts. It is about *Rhinolophus blasii*, *R. mehelyi*, *Myotis capaccinii*, *M. dasycneme*, *M. nattereri*, *M. bechsteini*, *Plecotus auritus*, *Vespertilio murinus*, *Eptesicus serotinus*, *Nyctalus lasiopterus*, *N. Leisleri* and *Pipistrellus nathusii*.

4. Threats

The lack of large education is the main cause of increasing anthropic pressure. Deforestation, uncontrolled visit of caves, without knowing the role of bats in insect control, pollution using the fertilizers, new buildings and industrial objectives in natural ecosystems etc. could be done without serious impact on the bat colonies. For these goals it is necessary (fortunately not very large) a financial support, to assure enough and optimum refuges or to avoid some human activities in an important area for bats.

5. Data collection

According to the Agreement on the Conservation of Bats in Europe, in Romania the collecting and the disturbance of the bats in their roosts are prohibited. The small bat collections in Universities and Museums were realized more than 30 years ago, when, for some species, colonies of thousands of individuals were reported. Those collections were the support for two PhD degree thesis, that time. Today only the observations, illustrated with photos from different shelters are valid, without disturbing colonies or individuals.

Unfortunately, in Romania, there are not ringing activities at all and there is a complete lack of data on the movement and seasonal migrations of some migratory species.

C. Measures Taken to implement 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

The previous Romanian report mentioned the Laws, Government Ordinance, Decisions, Conventions and Agreements devoted to the conservation of bats in the country.

However, some caves (Limanu – Dobroudjea, Grigore Decapolitul – Valcea Co.) were already closed with iron gates, with appropriate spaces for bats to fly when they enter or leave the roosts. Such measures will be extended to the most of caves in South-Western part of Romania. The entrances of other caves, with compact iron gates will be adapted with optimum spaces for bat access.

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

In 2001, eight caves from South-Western Romania were established, with colonies of different species of bats, which will be monitorized in 2002, by a mixed team of speleologists and chriopterlogists in order to protect species roosting there.

8. Consideration given to habitats which are important to bats

In all major Provinces of the country (Moldavia, Transylvania, Banat, Oltenia, Dobroudjea, Muntenia) there were important data about some isolated species, but a systematic study about all types of habitats: caves, rock crevices and mining galleries, tree hollows, steeplets and garrets etc. was not organized.

9. Activities carried out to promote the awarness of the importance of the bat conservation

In 2001, there were two public lectures (by Radulet Nastase and Dumitru Murariu) given in the Conference room of the „Grigore Antipa” National Museum of Natural History (MNINGA) on the occasion of the Sunday lectures of the Museum as well as with Bat Nights in Romania. The International Year (2001) for bats was very large discussed with attendants to the lectures. Calendar and leaflets printed by EUROBATS and distributed to the Ministry of the Environment as well as to the public, cultural institutions spread out much easier news about the Agreement and events dedicated to Bats.

In May 2002, MNINGA will organize a temporary exhibition about the biology and behaviour of Bats. In this exhibition, „Emil Racovita” Speleological Institute from Bucharest, Romanian Green Cross, GESS (Group for Underwater and Speleological Exploration) – the last two representing the Civil Society, with subunits in the most of counties will be implied. About 15 large and nice pictures were kindly offered by Chiropterological Information Center from Krakow – Poland, showing recent aspects from different Romanian caves situated in Western Carpathians and in South-Western part of the country.

This exhibition will be opened for 6 weeks and it is estimated to be visited by more than 5000 Romanian people; most of them (about 70%) will be scholars and students.

10. International Cooperation

Excepting the personal correspondence of the Romanians with foreign chiropterologists, a good opportunity to prove the work in team, under the guidance of Dr. Abigail Entwistle from Fauna and Flora International will be a concrete step in international co-operation. This step will be finished with a study of bats from South-Western part of Romania, where there are limestone mountains, with many caves – most important refuges for about 16 species of Chiroptera.