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THE BAT FAUNA OF AFRICA AND ITS THREATS*Note by the Secretariat*

The CMS Secretariat is circulating herewith, for the information of participants in the eighth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention and of the thirteenth meeting of the Scientific Council, the document entitled “*The bat fauna of Africa and its threats*” prepared by Mr. Antony Hutson and submitted to the UNEP/EUROBATS Secretariat. The report is being reproduced unedited in the form and the language in which it was received by the Secretariat.

The bat fauna of Africa and its threats

The Afrotropical bat fauna (including Madagascar, islands of the western Indian Ocean and the southern parts of the Arabian Peninsula) comprises over 250 bat species in nine families. The world fauna is over 1100 species in 18 families.

At the generic level, Africa (especially eastern Africa) is a global centre of bat biodiversity (see Hutson et al., p.74). The 40 species of fruit bats (Pteropodidae) are in 14 genera, 11 of which are endemic to Africa.

The Global Mammals Assessment workshop (2004) assigned 220 African bat species to the following IUCN categories of threat:

Extinct in the wild:	1	0.46%
Critically Endangered:	8	3.65%
Endangered:	6	2.74%
Vulnerable:	27	12.33%
Near Threatened:	33	15.07%
Data Deficient:	38	17.35%
Least Concern:	106	48.40%

Thus less than half the bat species can be considered 'safe' from extinction at the present time.

The key habitats of concern in Africa are

1. forests, especially montane, coastal and riverine in the east and south, plus lowland rainforest and wet savannah woodland in central and west;
2. grassland and savannah woodland (e.g. miombo, mopane);
3. caves

Identified principal regional threats are:

Southern Africa: monoculture and use of pesticides, deforestation (e.g. for fuel, agriculture, development), afforestation of grasslands, such as savannah, with non-native trees;

East Africa: loss of coastal and higher altitude forest, persecution in some areas (e.g. Ethiopia);

Central Africa: deforestation (especially remnant high altitude), conversion of savannah woodland, conversion of permanent and seasonal wetlands;

West Africa: shifting agriculture, logging, conversion of savannah and other woodland.

Note that islands of the Gulf of Guinea and off Tanzania include important bat fauna with special conservation problems.

Specific threats include:

1. Disturbance to caves, lava tubes and other underground habitats (changes of use, mining, tourism, cattle sheltering, over-exploitation of guano, exploitation of bats, cave closure, conversion to restaurant/disco);
2. Public perception (including lack of appreciation of beneficial role of bats, e.g. pollination and seed dispersal);
3. Perceived association with diseases (widely exaggerated concept of impact of a range of disease organisms);
4. Lack of protected status;
5. Pest status ('competition' with fruit growers, bats in buildings);

6. Persecution in buildings (molossids, *Scotophilus*), in local trees (colonial fruit bats);
7. Use of poisons (e.g. for weaver birds, tsetse flies, bats in houses);
8. Over-exploitation for food (mainly cave bats and colonial tree-roosting fruit bats);
9. Mining, particularly of karst areas;
10. Electrocution on power lines (of island fruit bats);
11. ?climate change;
12. Lack of knowledge of the bat fauna (survey and research).

Recommendations:

Re legislation (persecution, exploitation), habitats, roosts, education, survey & research

See Hutson et al. p.76 (also 52-53, 171-177)

Review of status and conservation needs of fruit bats of Africa (update of Mickleburgh et al. 1992)

Note existence of local bat interest (conservation) groups in South Africa and *African Bat Conservation News*.

Information from:

Hutson, A.M., Mickleburgh, S.P. & Racey, P.A. 2001. *Microchiropteran Bats – global status survey and conservation action plan*. IUCN, Gland. 259pp.

Mickleburgh, S.P., Hutson, A.M. & Racey, P.A. 1992. *Old World Fruit Bats – An Action Plan for their Conservation*. IUCN, Gland. 252pp.

Unpublished data from *IUCN Global Mammals Assessment* workshop, January 2004. (full results, including distribution biological and other data used for Red List Assessments, to be made available on www in 2006).

Mammals of Africa (edited Happold et al., in prep/press).

Bergmans, W. 1988-1997. Taxonomy and Biogeography of African Fruit Bats, parts 1-5. *Beaufortia*.

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