



Report of a bat seminar and a bat field workshop in Belarus, summer 2012

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Introduction

In the summer of 2009 a group of ecotourists from the Netherlands visited APB, Birdlife Belarus. At that occasion the first contacts were made for co-operation between Belarusian and Dutch bat researchers and conservationists. These first contacts lead to a visit of three bat conservationists and researchers in February – March 2010. A report of this visit is available on [the foundation's website](#) (link to a PDF document). This visit lead to contacts with the Brest volunteers of the bat working group 'Barbastella', part of APB BirdLife Belarus.

The visit in the winter of 2010 lead to the conclusions that there was a very strong wish to study and protect bats in Belarus, but that the possibilities of the active volunteers were limited. Also the number of active researchers and conservationists was small. There was a lack of equipment and financial sources for travelling through the beautiful country of Belarus. And, an essential imperfection, there seemed to be no national non governmental organisation (NGO) for bat research, management and conservation. These conclusions were presented to The Habitat Foundation, in combination with a limited list of recommendations. The recommendations could be distinguished in three clusters with possibilities for international co-operation:

- knowledge and use of knowledge,
- technology and
- financial.

In 2011 and in the early months of 2012 the recommendations were worked out in a program for a seminar and workshop in the summer of 2012. After promises for funding by the World Wildlife Fund, Bat Conservation International, the Mammal Working Group of South-Holland (a province in the Netherlands) and some private persons, the preparations for the activities in Belarus started. Around the 1st of June 2012 the program was finalised. Announcements were made, invitations were send and accommodations were booked.

1. Project motives and aims

About 20 people work on bats in Belarus, with only 5 specialists conducting systematic studies. Most work concentrates on hibernacula and is done on a regional basis. About the distribution and habitat use of bats in summer little is known. For the conservation of bats in Belarus and abroad it is important to learn more about the Belarusian bat populations. Especially in the light of the fast changes in land use in Belarus. This may be detrimental to bats, but bats may also profit from it. An example of the latter case is the process of FSC certification of Belarusian Forestry. This implies that the foresters take the well-being of wildlife into account in their management and exploitation of the forests. Doing this is only possible when you know what you have. For Belarus this means that more surveys must be carried out, which implies that more people must be involved.

The project had three goals:

- 1) involve more people, especially young biologists, in bat research and bat conservation;
- 2) improve the collaboration between Belarusian bat workers and bat workers in other parts of Europe;
- 3) increase the awareness among foresters about bats and their requirements in forests.

2. Planned activities

We planned the following activities.

- Give two workshops about bats and bat research in the summer. The first gives a general introduction about bats, their habitat use and survey techniques. During the second the participants will practise the techniques in the field.
- The workshops will be given by foreign bat experts, from Ukraine and the Netherlands.
- Give several bat detectors to the Belarusian bat working group.
- Arrange a meeting between Belarusian bat workers and foresters to discuss the possibilities for bat friendly forest management.
- Produce a leaflet and a booklet about bats and forest management in the Belarusian language.
- Generate publicity about bats and their conservation in Belarus.

The activities were organised in collaboration with APB BirdLife Belarus and the National Academy of Science of Belarus. Both are professional organisations which guaranteed that the activities were carried out as planned. Also, in both organisations bat specialists are active, which gave some guarantee that the acquired knowledge will be used and spread within and – hopefully – also outside the organisations.

3. The organisation team

The seminar and the workshop were prepared and organised by six people:

1. Elena Godlevska (Bat working group Ukraine), responsible for the program and the content of the seminar and the workshop;
2. Peter Lina (Bat working group Netherlands), responsible for the program and the content of the seminar and the workshop;
3. Denis Tabunov (APB BirdLife Belarus), organisation of accommodations, transport, invitations and the required contacts in Belarus;
4. Aliaksei Shpak (National Academy of Sciences of Belarus), necessary contacts between scientific organisations, nature conservationists and the National Academy of Science of Belarus;
5. Dennis Wansink (The Habitat Foundation), financial organisation and commissioning;
6. Fons Bongers (The Habitat Foundation), overall project management.

Many thanks are due to Denis Tabunov. During several months he was the liaison officer between the Dutch part of the organisation and the people and organisations in Belarus. Denis was presented to the Dutch organisers by APB BirdLife Belarus. All contacts were via e-mail and Skype.

4. Program: seminar & workshop

4.1 Seminar

On Monday, July 2nd , 2012 a seminar was organised at the Belarus Academy of Science in Minsk. The program of this seminar was as follows:

Nr.	Subject	Presentation
1	Bats of Europe and Belarus	E. Godlevska / A. Shpak
2	Conservation status in Europe	E. Godlevska / A. Shpak
3	Conservation status in Belarus	N. Minchenko ¹
4	Bats and rabies	P. Lina
6a	Practical bat conservation	E. Godlevska / A. Shpak
6b	Practical bat conservation	P. Lina

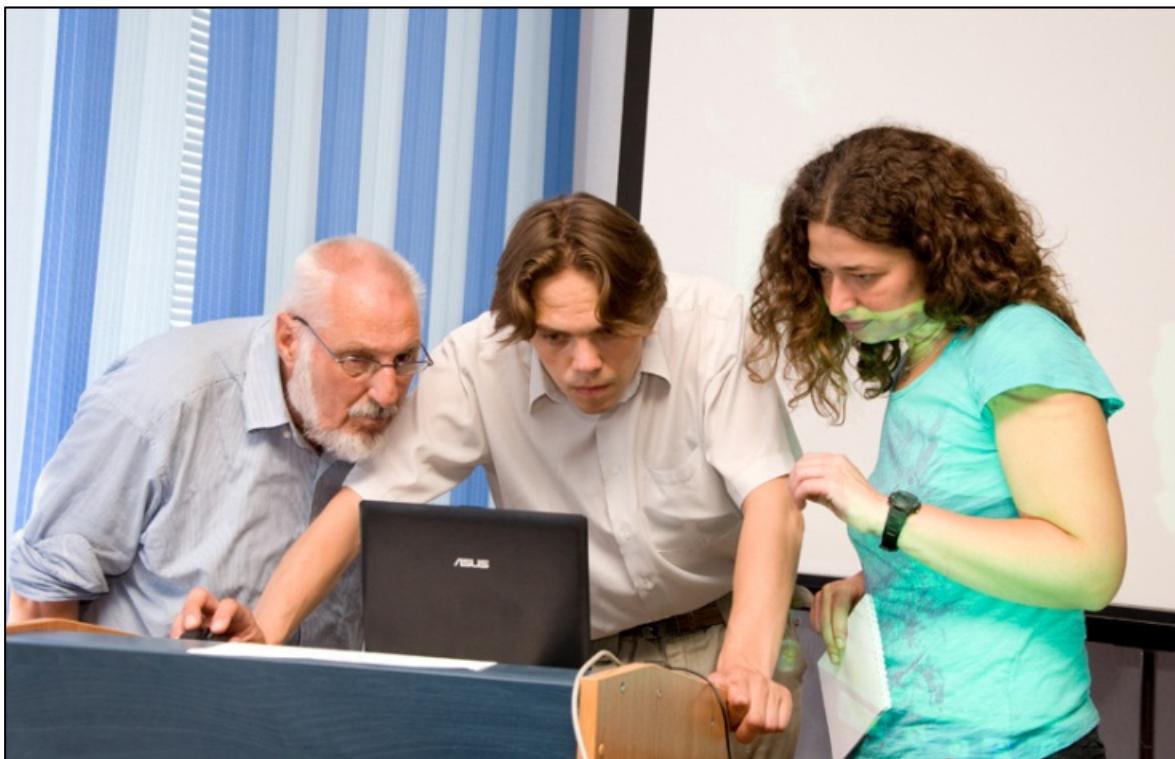
¹ Miss Minchenko was the representative of the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection in Belarus.

Invited for the seminar were foresters, biologists, students in forestry and biology, civil servants of departments concerned with nature (conservation) and forestry, representatives of the National Parks and volunteers interested in bats. Ten people came to the seminar. APB BirdLife aimed at 20 participants, but unfortunately none of the representatives of the forestry, nor forestry students came. However, two representatives of the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection came. One of them, Natalya Minchenko, gave an unplanned presentation about the conservation status of bats in Belarus. The occasion was used to ask Ms Minchenko to become the Administrative Focal Point for Belarus for the UNEP Agreement on the Conservation of Populations of European Bats (UNEP/EUROBATS). Which she did.

In the evening the main part of the group visited the nature reserve Roshta, a sub-urban area south of Minsk. Here we demonstrated fieldwork techniques (bat detectors and mist netting) to the participants and observed some bats. One very active volunteer joined our group in the evening. He came from a town in the north of Belarus and spend most of the day travelling to Minsk to participate in the field trip!

The presence of participants was a little disappointing for the organisers. The main reason for the absence of some participants who were interested in the seminar was the fact that the 2nd of July was a day in between two official national celebration days. Nevertheless we were glad that most of the participants were young people, so that one objective of the seminar ('involve more people, especially young biologists, in bat research and bat conservation') was achieved.

The seminar also exercised the second objective ('improve the collaboration between Belarusian bat workers and bat workers in other parts of Europe'), as was clearly visible during the presentations (see picture below).



Bat experts from the Netherlands (Peter Lina), Belarus (Aliaksei Shpak) and Ukraine (Elena Godlevska) discuss the upcoming lecture about bat research and conservation in Belarus.



Aliaksei Shpak giving his lecture about bats in Belarus.



Elena Godlevska explaining the use of a bat detector during the excursion in the nature reserve Roshta, Minsk.

4.2 Workshop

On the 3rd of July (Independence Day in Belarus) we travelled to Minor Lyutsinki (Малой Лючинки), a village 50 km west of Minsk, for the workshop. The accommodation was an inn (Усадьба "Мартинова Гусь"), especially built for group accommodation. The location was chosen for the diversity of natural habitats and the assumption that the practices in the evenings could be held in the accompany of several species of bats. The workshop took 4 days.



Location of the workshop: manor 'Matrinova Goose' (Усадьба "Мартинова Гусь") near the village of Minor Lyutsinki, Belarus.

Lectures

The program and lectures were developed by Elena Godlevska and Peter Lina. For the workshop they used material of a similar workshop held by Herman Limpens and Peter Lina in 2003 in Ukraine and in 2008 in Georgia. We are very

grateful to Herman Limpens, one of Europe's most distinguished bat researcher, that he allowed us to use his material.

The content of the lectures was more or less the same as the lectures held in Minsk, because most participants were new and did not attend the seminar in Minsk. Extra were lectures about bat survey techniques and species identification. The program was as follows.

Day	Nr.	Subject	Presentation
1	1	Bats of Europe	E. Godlevska
1	2	Conservation status	E. Godlevska
1	3a	Basic field methods	E. Godlevska
1	3b	Basic field methods	P. Lina
1	4	Bats & echolocation	E. Godlevska
1	5	Fieldwork: use of bat detector	
2	1	Bats & rabies	P. Lina
2	2	Non (less)-invasive survey methods	P. Lina
2	3	Bats & detectors	E. Godlevska
2	4	Species identification	E. Godlevska
2	5	Fieldwork: mistnetting	
3	1	Practical conservation	E. Godlevska / P. Lina
3	2	Detectors & species identification	E. Godlevska
3	3	Discuss future work in Belarus	
4	1	Planning future work & make agreements	F. Bongers

Fieldwork

During the workshop fieldwork was carried out on two successive nights. On the first night we explained and demonstrated the use of bat detectors. A few participants had bat detectors of their own, but they were not yet acquainted with the use of it. The others we provided them with bat detectors taken from the Netherlands. During the fieldwork we observed four species of bats:

- Daubenton's Bat (*Myotis daubentonii*)
- Northern Bat (*Eptesicus nilssonii*)
- Noctule (*Nyctalus noctula*)
- Natusius' pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus nathusii*)

On the second night we demonstrated the use of mist nets. Two mist nets were placed above the river Islach (Іслач) near the village Borovikovschina

(Баравікоўшчына), some 5 km south of Minor Lyutsinki. We only caught Daubenton's Bats, but the nice thing was that the participants could see the animals from nearby. Interesting was that most animals had marks of frostbite on their ears. Seems that the hibernation sites in the area don't protect the animals too well against the cold.

During the mist netting also several Natusius' pipistrelles were heard flying above the river, but they did not get caught in the nets.

Bat detectors

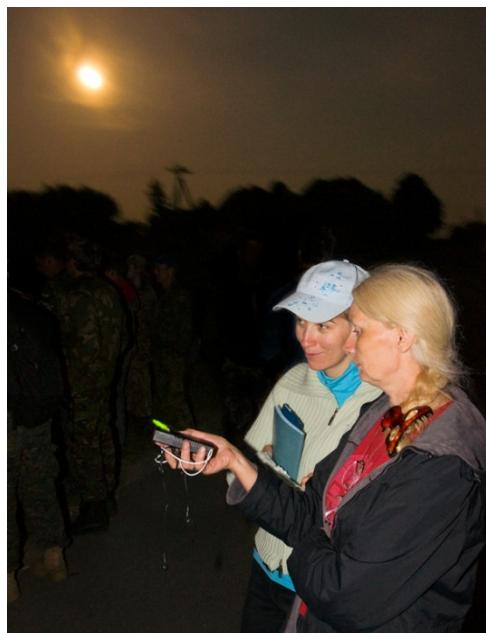
Learning how to use bat detectors is not very useful if you don't have bat detectors. With the money of the funds and sponsors we bought 10 bat detectors (7 Pettersson D200's and 3 Pettersson D230's). These were given to participants that showed most interest in learning about bats and the use of bat detectors. Some of them actually represented a group of (potential) bat workers, like the Bat working group of Brest and employees of the Academy of Science.



Valerij Dombrowskij receives a bat detector from Fons Bongers.

4.3 Excursion in Minsk

When returning to Minsk after the workshop several participants wanted some extra training in the use of the bat detectors. It was nice to hear that they were eager to learn more, so we organised an extra training in the park Pieramohi along the Svislach river in Minsk. We heard some Daubenton's Bats and several Natusius' pipistrelles and possibly found a roost of Natusius' pipistrelles.



*Impressions of the excursions
during the workshop in Minor
Lyutsinki*



5. Follow up

The following activities were agreed upon as follow ups of the seminar and the workshop.

1. The new owners of bat detectors will publish results of their work with the bat detectors on the website of APB BirdLife Belarus.
2. If the bat detectors are not used for 1 year, the bat detectors will be given to a new owner, who also promises to publish his/her results on the website of APB BirdLife Belarus.
3. Three years after the seminar and workshop The Habitat Foundation will visit Belarus again to evaluate the progress of the work on bats and the dissemination of knowledge and experiences.
4. In collaboration with APB BirdLife Belarus and the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus the [leaflet Bats and Forestry](#) of EUROBATS (www.eurobats.org) will be translated to Russian and disseminated among foresters, biologists and the institutes and administrations concerned with forestry and nature conservation in Belarus. [the translation was finalised in August 2013 and is available from the website of the Belarusian Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection:
http://www.minpriroda.gov.by/uploads/files/000683_320324_bukletmishi.pdf]
5. In collaboration with APB BirdLife Belarus, the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus and Alexander Kashtalian of the Berezinsky Biosphere Reserve a booklet about bats and forestry will be produced, written in Russian. The booklet will be an updated version of the Dutch booklet 'Vleermuizen, bomen en bos' (Bats, trees and forest). [Click here for a PDF-file](#) of the Dutch booklet. This booklet will also be disseminated among foresters, biologists and the institutes and administrations concerned with forestry and nature conservation in Belarus.

6. Acknowledgement

We like to thank the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus and Alexander Shpak for their hospitality and offering a lecture room for the seminar. We also like to thank Alexander and Ludmilla Biely of the manor 'Matrinova Goose' for the good care they took of us during our stay in Minor Lyutsinki. Denis Tabunov of APB BirdLife Belarus did an excellent job as organiser of all the activities, travels and accommodations during the week in Belarus and explaining bat research and conservation would not have been possible without the help of Elena Godlevska. Lastly, we are very grateful to Herman Limpens, one of Europe's most distinguished bat researcher, who allowed us to use his presentations as a template for our lectures.

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EUROBATS

Bat Conservation International

Zoogdierenwerkgroep Zuid-Holland

World Wildlife Fund

Nico Jonker

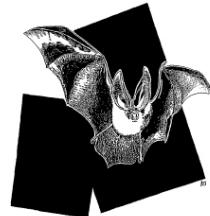
Sim Broekhuizen

Niels de Zwarte

Petra Vlaming

Gerard Hofman

Edith Stuivenberg



Appendix A. Observed bats

A list of bats seen/heard during the week in Belarus. Besides the sightings during the workshop and the excursion after the seminar in Minsk, bats were also seen/heard during other nights in Minsk.

30-06-2012 Minsk, urban area ($53^{\circ} 55.344'N$, $27^{\circ} 33.600'O$):

- Several Northern Bats (*Eptesicus nilssonii*)
- Some noctules (*Nyctalus noctula*)

01-07-2012. Minsk, Maxim Gorky Park

- A few Daubenton's Bats (*Myotis daubentonii*) above a pond in the park.

02-07-2012 Minsk. Sub-urban park Roshta (Роща) ($53^{\circ} 50.184'N$, $27^{\circ} 28.483'O$). This evening we also placed a mist net. No catches.

- Several Northern Bats (*Eptesicus nilssonii*)
- Some noctules (*Nyctalus noctula*)

03 to 06-07-2012 Minor Lyutsinki (Малая Люцінка):

- Several Daubenton's Bats (*Myotis daubentonii*) above the lake next to the village
- Several Northern Bats (*Eptesicus nilssonii*)
- Some noctules (*Nyctalus noctula*)
- Some Natusius' pipistrelles (*Pipistrellus nathusii*)

05-07-2012, River Islach (Іслач) near the village Borovikovschina (Барвікоўшчына), training with mist nets:

- Catch of 7 Daubenton's Bats (*Myotis daubentonii*), males, females (including two lactating females)
- Observation of several Natusius' pipistrelles (*Pipistrellus nathusii*)

07-08-2012, Minsk, park ($53^{\circ} 55.535'N$ $27^{\circ} 32.304'O$):

- Some Daubenton's Bats (*Myotis daubentonii*) above the park lake
- Observation of several Natusius' pipistrelles (*Pipistrellus nathusii*), found a possible roost in a tree, poplar

Appendix B. Participants of the workshop in Minor Lyutsinki (July 3-6, 2012)



- | | |
|-------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. Aleksey Shpak | 15. Maxim Nemchinov |
| 2. Alexander Olgomets | 16. Pavel Veligurov |
| 3. Andrey Abramchuk | 17. Roman Nefidovich |
| 4. Anna Marchik | 18. Ruslan Novitskij |
| 5. Denis Tabunov | 19. Sachvon Vitaly |
| 6. Dennis Wansink | 20. Valentin Rabchuk |
| 7. Dmitrij Zhuraavlivov | 21. Valerij Dombrowskij |
| 8. Egor Korzun | 22. Victor Demianchik jr. |
| 9. Elena Godlevska | 23. Victor Demianchik sr. |
| 10. Elena Kulikova | 24. Savva Jushkov |
| 11. Fons Bongers | 25. Yulya Galakh |
| 12. Ivan Orlov | 26. Alexander Biely (Host) |
| 13. Maria Demianchik | 27. Ludmila Biely (Hostess) |
| 14. Maxim Koloskov | |



Aleksey Shpak



Alexander Olgomets



Andrey Abramchuk



Anna Marchik



Denis Tabunov



Dennis Wansink



Dmitrij Zhuraavliov



Egor Korzun



Elena Godlevska



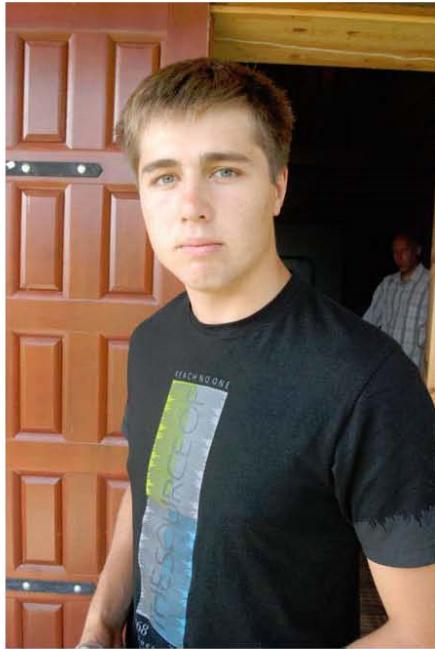
Elena Kulikova



Fons Bongers



Ivan Ohov



Roman Nefidovich



Ruslan Novitskij



Sachvon Vitaly



Valentin Rabchuk



Valerij Dombrowskij



Victor Demianchik jr.



Victor Demianchik sr.



Savva Jushkov



Yulya Galakh



Alexander Biely (Host)



Ludmila Biely (Hostess)

