

Bats (Chiroptera) of Mount Parnon and Moustos Wetland

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Abstract

Bats of the protected area of Mount Parnon and Moustos Wetland were systematically recorded for the first time within the framework of the project "Survey and monitoring of Chiroptera species" under the demands of Art. 17 of the Habitats Directive. We aimed to collect baseline information and, where possible, assess the conservation status of local bat populations. Fieldwork was conducted in June 2014, and in October and April 2015. Sampling comprised roost searches (caves, rock cavities, chapels, bridges, etc.), roost captures, mistnetting at foraging sites and acoustic surveys at a variety of sites, covering a large proportion of the study area. In total, we recorded 22 species (65% of all species present in Greece) in 20 days of fieldwork, including two of the rarest bats in the country, *Barbastella barbastellus* and *Nyctalus lasiopterus*. The most common bat was *Pipistrellus pygmaeus*. Bat foraging habitat in the study area appears to be highly variable and well preserved. Only three of the several known caves in the wider area were found to host important mixed species colonies of several hundred individuals, including seven Annex II species. All three caves showed seasonal changes in species composition and abundance, and all are located just outside of the borders of the protected area, while only one is located within a Natura 2000

site. Within the framework of the project, we propose that these caves be included in the protected zones to ensure their conservation. Further fieldwork will be conducted in September 2015.

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