



APUS & NYCTALUS - Protection of Common Swift (*Apus apus*) and bats in buildings in Slovakia (BIODIV)

LIFE10 NAT/SK/000079



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#### Project description:

##### Background

The common swift (*Apus apus*) and some bat species, notably the noctule bat (*Nyctalus noctula*), have until relatively recently been considered common species in Slovakia. The loss of many of their natural breeding habitats – old forest stands with large trees providing suitable tree hollows – has been substituted by the creation of appropriate artificial breeding conditions in human settlements. As they have moved from forests to urban sites, there has been a gradual shift of roosting and nesting strategies. Today they occupy mainly prefabricated panelled houses and buildings. Nearly 99% of the current Slovak swift population breeds in manmade structures. There are no comparable estimates for bats, but because of favourable microclimatic conditions, safety from predators and the availability of roosts, today most of the Slovak noctule populations use crevices and hollows in prefab buildings in new urban sites. In recent years, the greatest threat to both of these species has come from the renovation and thermal insulation of prefabricated buildings. According to recent estimates, the overall Slovak swift population has dropped by at least 50-60% over the last two decades (1990-2010). To date, this problem has received little attention from the nature conservation authorities. Unless this situation is addressed and without appropriate measures the Slovak swift population could collapse within the next 10-20 years over most of the country.

##### Objectives

The APUS & NYCTALUS biodiversity project's main objective was to halt the recent decline of the common swift (*Apus apus*) and noctule bat populations in Slovakia. It aimed to protect their nesting and roosting habitats – especially in urban areas – by introducing suitable management practices aimed at improving the conservation status of the species. A series of actions were planned, targeting the installation of artificial nesting/roosting facilities and the provision of training and guidance on habitat loss prevention and of the importance of conserving the species. The project actions would be mainly implemented in 48 pilot sites in the city centres and suburbs of eight regional capitals (Bratislava, Trnava, Nitra, Trenčín, Žilina, Banská Bystrica, Prešov and Košice) and 40 provincial towns.

## Results

The APUS & NYCTALUS project achieved its overall aim of increasing populations of swift in Slovakia. The number of nesting sites for populations of swifts as well as other bird species increased in 417 sites across the country. Around 2 400 boxes for swifts and 800 boxes for bats were installed. Similarly, the number of roosting sites for bats per square kilometre was increased in at least 16 sites in all eight regional capitals. The occupancy of the boxes was recorded to have increased in the last year of the project. But monitoring will continue for five years to get a reliable picture. A detailed database was established. Around 14 400 plastic grids for ventilation shafts were modified.

Based on the project's results a new legislative regulation was adopted. The legislation obliges expert surveys to be carried out on conservation of nesting and roosting sites of birds and bats before installing thermal insulation or renovating buildings in Slovakia. This approach has proved to be successful and can be applied in other Member States as well as non-EU countries, especially those with similar urban architecture. The municipalities of Bratislava-Karlova Ves and Púchov have adopted and successfully applied principles of the protection of swifts and bats in buildings with support from their own budgets.

The project moreover represents a replicable example of protection of species that are not sufficiently protected by national and EU legislation. It demonstrated a coordinated, comprehensive and systematic approach to a specific conservation issue. Bulgarian authorities asked for some of the project's outcomes (catalogue of model solutions, technical manual) for application in Bulgaria. Furthermore, the project's approach brings together partners with different backgrounds and expertise, namely NGOs focused on protection of birds and bats, public authorities dealing with environment and constructions, the business sector represented by construction companies, architects and managers of buildings (i.e. owners). In total 345 stakeholders, including decision makers and environmental officers, received training on implementing principles of protection of birds and bats in buildings. They are part of the process of issuing construction permits where these principles will be included. The project significantly raised public awareness about the target species by communication activities. It created a catalogue of model solutions and a technical manual.

The project's actions also contribute to the EU 2020 Biodiversity Strategy and 7th

EU Environment Action Programme. The project moreover created 25 new jobs out of which 13 were full-time jobs. Other new jobs are arising based on the demand for services, expertise and the implementation of conservation measures. It is expected that the project achievements will be safeguarded through the implementation of the 'Guideline on protection of birds and bats in buildings' and the 'Act on Nature and Landscape Protection', which includes articles related to the topic. Also the 'Operation Programme Quality of Environment' contains measures for protecting nesting and roosting sites on public buildings.

The project has been the winner case study of the CEEweb Award 2014 in the "Green Infrastructure and restoration, and their tangible benefits" category.

Further information on the project can be found in the project's layman report and After-LIFE Communication Plan (see "Read more" section).

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Environmental issues addressed:

Themes

Biodiversity issues - Urban biodiversity

Species - Birds

Species - Mammals

Keywords

biodiversity, urban area, building renovation

Target EU Legislation

- Nature protection and Biodiversity
- Directive 92/43 - Conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora- Habitats Directiv ...
- Directive 2009/147 - Conservation of wild birds - Birds Directive (codified version of Directive ...

Target species

Apus apus Delichon urbica Nyctalus noctula Pipistrellus pipistrellus  
Vespertilio murinus

Natura 2000 sites

Not applicable

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Beneficiaries:

Coordinator	Regional Association for Nature Conservation and Sustainable Development - Bratislava
Type of organisation	NGO-Foundation
Description	The Regional Association for Nature Conservation and Sustainable Development (BROZ) is a civic association established in Bratislava in 1997. It is active in nature conservation, enhancement and restoration of biodiversity, promotion of sound regional planning and sustainable development at regional and local levels and in environmental education. The association mainly operates in south-western Slovakia.
Partners	SOS/BirdLife Slovakia Slovak Bat Conservation Society

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Administrative data:

Project reference	LIFE10 NAT/SK/000079
Duration	01-JAN-2012 to 31-DEC -2015
Total budget	1,481,248.00 €
EU contribution	740,624.00 €
Project location	Bratislavsky kraj(Slovakia Slovensko) Zapadne Slovensko(Slovakia Slovensko) Stredne Slovensko(Slovakia Slovensko) Vychodne Slovensko(Slovakia Slovensko) Extra-Regio(Slovakia Slovensko) Associated Slovakia (SK)(Slovakia Slovensko)

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Read more:

Project web site [Projet's website](#)

Publication: After-LIFE Communication Plan	Title: After-LIFE Communication Plan Author: Ján Gúgh & Andrej Chudý Editor: Regional Association for Nature Conservation and S No of pages: 6
Publication: After-LIFE Communication Plan	Title: After-LIFE Communication Plan (Slovak version) Author: Ján Gúgh & Andrej Chudý Editor: Regional Association for Nature Conservation and S No of pages: 6
Publication: Layman report	Title: Layman report Editor: BROZ & BirdLife Slovensko No of pages: 20
Publication: Layman report	Title: Layman report (Slovak version) Editor: BROZ & BirdLife Slovensko No of pages: 20
Publication: Technical report	Title: Project's Final technical report Year: 2016 Editor: Regional Association for Nature Conservation and S No of pages: 83
Slides Presentation	Title: Standard presentation (Annex B of Final report) Editor: Regional Association for Nature Conservation and S No of pages: 41
Video link	<a href="#">"Návrat dážďovníkov" [SK - 30']</a>

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