

NOTIFICATION TO THE PARTIES

CMS 2020/005
AEWA 2020/002
EUROBATS 2020/001

8 April 2020

FACTS ABOUT BATS AND COVID-19

As efforts are stepping up around the world to prevent the further spread of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19), there have been numerous reports that various communities and governmental authorities in several regions of the world have been culling bats in a misplaced effort to combat the disease.

Through this joint notification, the Secretariats of the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS), the Agreement on the Conservation of Populations of European Bats (EUROBATS) and the Agreement on the Conservation of African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbirds (AEWA) are bringing this alarming situation to the attention of all of our Parties and partners, to seek help in taking action to address such activities. To that end, the three Secretariats, in consultation with bat experts in the CMS Family, have prepared the following factual points for further dissemination:

1. Bats do not spread COVID-19. COVID-19 is being transmitted from humans to other humans.
2. There is no evidence that bats directly infected humans with COVID-19 in the first place. Scientific investigations are pointing to a chain of events that may have involved bats but most likely only through an intermediate animal.
3. There are some 1,400 bat species living in the wild around the world. Many have adapted to urban environments, living in backyard gardens, urban parks and even roosting under bridges, without posing the slightest threat to their human neighbours.
4. Bats provide enormous benefits including pollination, seed dispersal and pest control, worth billions of dollars annually.
5. Many bat species are in trouble and need our help to survive. Dozens of bat species are protected by CMS and EUROBATS. But much more needs to be done to ensure the survival of bats around the world. While the killing of bats will not have any effects on the spread of COVID-19, it would adversely affect the conservation status of bat populations.
6. A similar misdirected focus occurred at the height of the 2006 avian influenza, with calls for widespread culling of migratory waterbirds and the draining of their wetland habitats.