

Record of *Barbastella barbastellus* (Schreber, 1774) (Chiroptera, Vespertilionidae) in Sicily after 56 years

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Abstract. The capture of a Barbastelle bat (*Barbastella barbastellus*, Schreber 1774) that has not been found in Sicily for 56 years is reported, thus confirming its presence on the island. The bat was caught in the summer of 2012, using mist nets along the Alcantara river in the territory of Randazzo (CT).

Keywords: Barbastelle, Sicily, Nebrodi.

INTRODUCTION

In Sicily twenty bat species are presently known, whose status has been reported on a recent communication by Agnelli et. Al. (2008). The Barbastelle bat (*Barbastella barbastellus*, Schreber 1774), a *Chiroptera* of the *Vespertilionidae* family, is one of the rarest bats on the island, with a single record in Bosco della Ficuzza, in the territory of Corleone (Palermo), dating back to 1956 (Kahmann, 1957). Since then there have been no other record of this species, and its actual presence had to be reconfirmed.

In the summer of 2012, as part of a wider study on *Chiroptera* in Sicily, a survey of the presence of bats in forest environments was conducted inside the Nebrodi park, using mist nets to capture specimens.

THE LOCATION

The capture location is situated along the course of the Alcantara river, at Mulino di San Giacomo, inside the Nebrodi Regional Park, in the east part of Sicily. The site lies at an altitude of 1050 m on the sea level and can be reached by a narrow road starting from the hamlet of Floresta, but lying within the territory of the town of Randazzo (CT). This is a mixed broad-leaf and conifer forest area, predominantly populated by chestnut, downy oak, black pine, poplar and willow.

Its geographical position is given by the following coordinates: Lat. 37°57'12" - Long. 14°55'16" (WGS84).

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Capture activities have been carried out on 27th July 2012, using 2 mist nets (19 mm mesh and 5 pockets each), 9 m in length and overlapping to give an overall height of 4 m, po-

sitioned directly over the river course just a few centimetres above the water surface with the aid of telescopic poles. Operations were conducted after sunset and lasted for 3 hours. The methodological instructions reported by Agnelli *et al.* (2004) have been followed throughout the course of all operations.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The investigations have established the presence of the Barbastelle bat on the Alcantara river, with the capture of a specimen at 22:00h at a height of 2.5 m in the net. The specimen was an adult male with the following biometric measurements: forearm length 39.0 mm, weight 7.5 g (Fig. 1).

Once the measurement operations had been concluded, pictures of the bat were taken and the animal promptly released.

Thus, after 56 years, the capture of the Barbastelle confirmed the presence in Sicily of this species, which can be considered as the rarest bat species on the island.

The Barbastelle bat is protected in Europe by the Berne Convention (19 September 1979) and the Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC of 21/05/1992). In particular, it is included in Annex II of the Habitats Directive and is classified as a “Species of community interest whose conservation requires the designation of special areas of conservation”.



Fig. 1 – The captured Barbastelle bat (Photo Gaetano Fichera).

All activities have been carried out with the authorization by the Sicilian Region, Regional Assessorate for Agricultural and Food Resources (1742 - 01/06/2012), of the Ministry for the Environment and Territorial and Sea Protection (0009358 - 07/06/2012), and the Nebrodi park (51 - 25/06/2012) authorities.

RIASSUNTO

Segnalazione dopo 56 anni di *Barbastella barbastellus* (Schreber, 1774) (Chiroptera, Vespertilionidae) in Sicilia.

Si segnala la cattura, all'interno del Parco Regionale dei Nebrodi, di un Barbastello (*Barbastella barbastellus*, Schreber 1774), che non veniva più ritrovato in Sicilia da 56 anni, confermando così la sua presenza nell'isola. Il pipistrello è stato catturato nell'estate 2012, con l'uso di mist nets lungo il corso del Fiume Alcantara, in territorio di Randazzo (CT).

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