



United States Department of Agriculture

Forest Service

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Hoosier NF Highlights

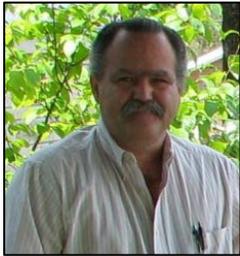
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Northern Long-eared Bat Now a Threatened Species



By Richard Winstead, Supervisory Wildlife Biologist

On April 2, 2015, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service published a final rule in the *Federal Register* designating the northern long-eared bat as a threatened species under the Endangered Species Act. The listing became effective on May 4, 2015. Also effective May 4 was an interim special rule under section 4(d) of the Act that provides flexibility to landowners, land managers, government agencies, and others as they conduct activities in areas that could be northern long-eared bat habitat. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, after reviewing public comments, will continue to refine this interim rule and publish a final version by the end of this year.

The northern long-eared bat's range includes much of the eastern and north central United States and Canada. It is about 3 to 3.7 inches long with a wingspan of 9 to 10 inches. As its name suggests, it is distinguished by its long ears, particularly compared to other bats in its genus, *Myotis*.

This bat emerges at dusk to fly primarily through the understory of forest areas, feeding on insects such as moths, flies, leafhoppers, caddisflies and beetles. It catches these insects while in flight using echolocation or by using gleaning behavior, catching motionless insects on vegetation.

The bats spend winter hibernating in caves and abandoned mines, called hibernacula. During summer, they roost alone or in small colonies underneath bark or in cavities or crevices of both live trees and snags (dead trees).

White-nose syndrome, a fungal disease affecting bats, is the predominant threat to the northern long-eared bat. This disease was first observed in New York in 2006 and spread rapidly. First detected in Indiana in January 2011 in Washington County, it has since spread to caves in 11 counties, including 5 counties within the Hoosier National Forest.

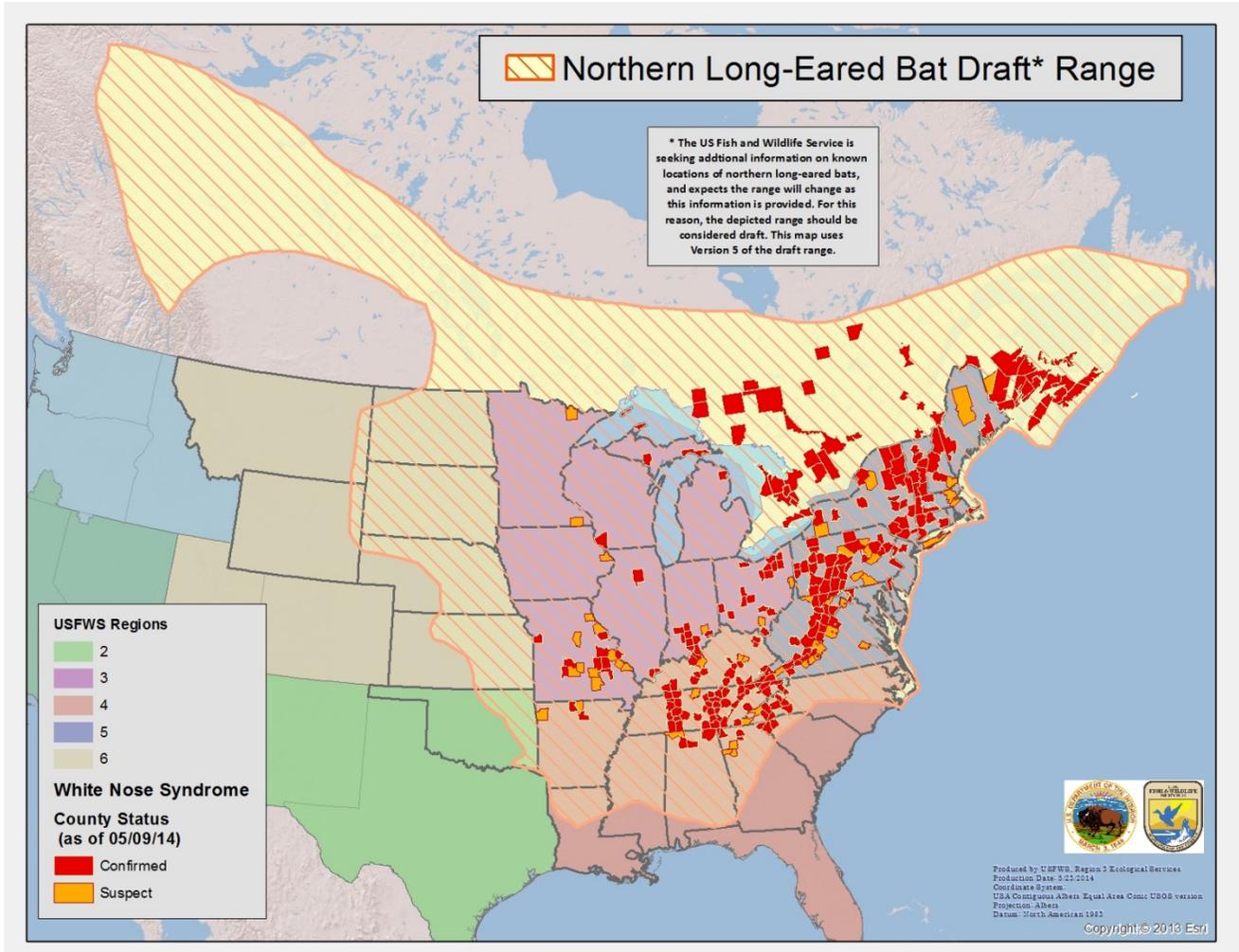
Forest biologists and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service have partnered to manage the Forest to provide habitat for Indiana bat, listed as an endangered species in 1967. Formal consultation between the two agencies for the current Land and Resource Management Plan resulted in a Biological Opinion for Indiana bat in 2006. In these documents, specifics are given regarding management of hibernacula, roosting habitat, foraging habitat, and water sources for Indiana bat. At this point biologists don't foresee many changes to how we manage habitat for bats in the future.

In March, 2015, Forest biologists initiated consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for ongoing projects that would not be completed before the May 4 listing. Seven projects were evaluated that may affect the northern long-eared bat and requested the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service concur with the findings that continuing the projects would not jeopardize the species.

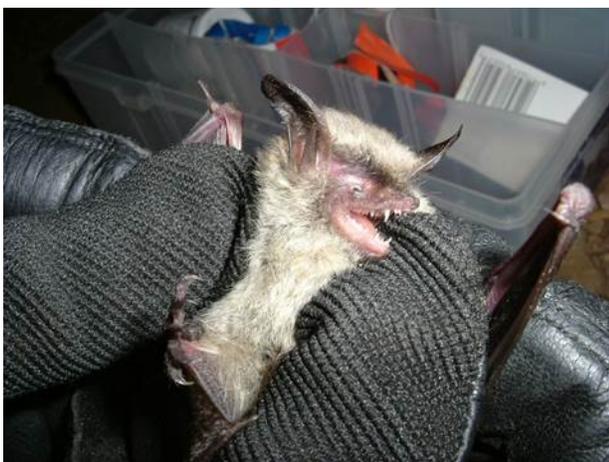
The Eastern Regional Office of the Forest Service reviewed the management for all 16 National Forests and the Tallgrass Prairie and concluded that active forest management, including timber harvest and prescribed burning, were essential for conserving the healthy forested conditions, habitat diversity, and ecosystem resiliency upon which the northern long-eared bat and other species depend.

The Hoosier will not know for sure how listing of the northern long-eared bat will affect proposed management until results from consultation are received. Generally, Forest projects either have no effect on forest bats or any detrimental effects are short-term and result in improved habitat conditions over the long-term for bats.

For more information contact Richard Winstead at 812-547-9246 or rwinstead@fs.fed.us.



Range Map for Northern Long-eared Bats and extent of white nose syndrome spread.



A northern long-eared bat caught on the Hoosier in 2004, weighed, measured, and released.