

## Are American Bats Losing Ground?

EIGHT MORE North American bats have been added to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service list of species being considered as candidates for endangered or threatened status. This brings the total to an alarming 56 percent of our bat species that are endangered or are under consideration for listing. There are 43 bat species in the United States and Canada. Bats now have the highest percentage of endangered or candidate species among all land mammals in the United States and Canada.

The new listings were included in the Federal Register published in November 1994. Although inclusion on the list is not a formal proposal for endangered or threatened status, it is the first step toward gaining official protection under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). All of the additional bats on the new list are Category 2 status, which means that while there is enough information to indicate that a proposal may be appropriate, conclusive data on biological vulnerability and threat are not currently available.

The additional North American bats on the list are *Idionycteris phyllotis* (Allen's lappet-browed bat), *Myotis ciliolabrum* (western small-footed myotis), *M. evotis* (long-eared myotis), *M. thysanodes* (fringed myotis), *M. volans* (long-legged myotis), *M. yumanensis* (Yuma myotis), *Nyctinomops macrotis* (big free-tailed bat), and *Plecotus townsendii pallescens* (western big-eared bat). Seven North American bats (six species, three subspecies) have been declared endangered. Twenty bats (18 species) are now on the candidate list.

Groundbreaking new data was obtained on four of the additional bats on the list during a joint radio-tracking project BCI conducted with the Arizona Game and Fish Department and the Coconino National Forest in Arizona [BATS, Summer 1994]. A fifth bat studied during the project, *Myotis lucifugus occultus* (Arizona myotis), was already on the candidate list. This study will continue gathering data on these bats for a third season this summer; another in the Chiricahua Mountains of Southeastern Arizona will be back for a second year.

Even if a species is formally proposed for endangered or threatened listing, the backlog for final designation is enormous—so much so that around three dozen proposed species have become extinct while waiting. Another major obstacle now is that the Endangered Species Act itself may be endangered. It has not been reauthorized since it expired in 1993, and it is highly likely that it will not be renewed in its present form, which could include a weakening of the Act and a decrease in funding.

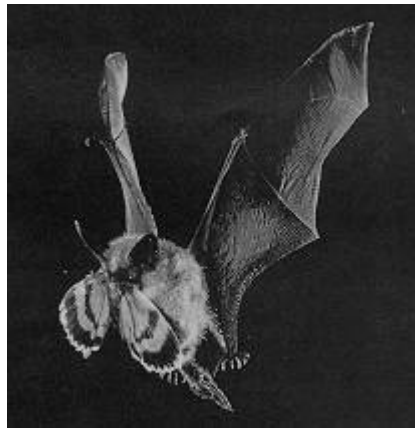
One of the biggest problems for bats and other less glamorous species under the ESA is that, even if declared endangered or threatened, animals with more public appeal often receive a very disproportionate share of funding for recovery. A recent University of Chicago study revealed that while the government has been willing to spend close to \$5 million to save one Florida panther and as much as \$184,000 for a single grizzly bear, it has invested less than \$3 for saving an endangered gray bat.

Despite this, gray bats (*Myotis grisescens*) have benefitted from ESA protection. But

without the personal efforts of concerned individuals and conservation groups like Bat Conservation International working with government agencies, prompting them into action, and helping to secure private donor funding, their partial recovery may never have taken place. On the other hand, Indiana bats (*M. sodalis*) continue to decline [BATS, June 1987]. Many wildlife managers are reluctant to allocate funds for the study or protection of species not yet declared endangered, which is precisely when funding could do the most good. Much more emphasis should be placed on preventing species from ever reaching the state where they need to be listed.

One of the bats on the new list, the Florida mastiff bat (*Eumops glaucinus floridanus*), was moved from Category 2 to Category 1 status, which means that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has enough information to support a proposal for endangered or threatened status. It will join the lineup of some 3,700 other animal and plant species still awaiting a final designation. The Florida mastiff bat may be one of the first official casualties, however; it hasn't been seen since 1989, and the previous sighting was some 10 years before that.

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*The long-eared myotis, a species that lives in the West, is a new addition to the list of species being considered for threatened or endangered listing.*

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