



The Florida bonneted bat, originally identified from an 11,700-year-old fossil in 1932, was formally listed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) as a candidate for the Endangered Species List. The agency said the entire species appears to number less than a few hundred individuals, all of them in South Florida.

Candidate species are identified when there is sufficient information on their status and threats to propose them as threatened or endangered, “but developing a proposed listing rule is precluded by higher-priority listing actions,” the FWS said. Candidates receive no special protection under the law, but conservation efforts are strongly encouraged. As priorities permit and more information is gathered, the species could be formally considered for official listing under the U.S. Endangered Species Act.

Four U.S. bat species – plus three subspecies – are currently listed as Endangered. The species are the gray bat, Indiana bat, lesser long-nosed bat and Mexican long-nosed bat. Endangered subspecies include the Ozark and Virginia big-eared bats and the Hawaiian hoary bat.

The Fish and Wildlife Service, in its candidate listing, described the Florida bonneted bat (*Eumops floridanus*) as a Priority 2 species (on a 10-point scale), for which the threat is high and imminent. The International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List cites the species as “critically endangered.”

As with many other bats, relatively few details are known of its foraging and roosting habits or of its precise conservation needs.

This bat (formerly known as Wagner’s mastiff bat) is the largest of Florida’s bats, with a wingspan of up to 18 ¾ inches (47.6 centimeters). It roosts singly or in groups of a few dozen individuals and does not migrate. Found in urban and forest habitats, Florida bonneted bats have been known to roost in tree hollows, including those made by woodpeckers, as well as in buildings, under Spanish-tile roofs, in dead palm fronds and in bat houses. Fast and agile, they hunt a variety of night-flying insects over open spaces.

Like most bats, female Florida bonneted bats produce just one pup each year, which dramatically complicates recovery from such low numbers. The species faces an array of threats, including intentional persecution and inadvertent disturbance by humans in populated areas. Loss of foraging habitat and both natural and manmade roost sites are constant risks. U.S. Fish and Wildlife says Florida bonneted bats are confirmed in only 12 locations, so the loss of any site could be catastrophic.

One of the few bright spots for this beleaguered bat is that White-nose Syndrome is not considered a threat (at least for now) because these bats do not hibernate and inhabit a very warm climate.

In the meantime, the future of the Florida bonneted bat is far from secure.

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