



Questions and Answers: Lesser Long-nosed Bat Delisting

Arizona Ecological Services Field Office

www.fws.gov/southwest/es/arizona/

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Q: What action is the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service taking?

A: The lesser long-nosed is the first bat delisted from the Endangered Species Act (ESA) due to recovery. This determination is based on thoroughly reviewing the best available scientific and commercial information (compiled in a [Species Status Assessment](#)). A rigorous review of the science indicates threats to the bat have been eliminated or reduced, populations are healthy and stable, and it no longer is endangered or threatened with endangerment under the ESA. The final delisting will become effective May 18, 2018.

Q: What is a lesser long-nosed bat?

A: The lesser long-nosed bat is one of three nectar-feeding bats in the United States. The bat is a migratory pollinator and seed disperser that provides important ecosystem services in arid forest, desert and grassland systems throughout its United States and Mexico range. Populations consist of a resident sub-population that remains year-round in central and southern Mexico to mate and give birth, and a migratory sub-population that winters and mates in central and southern Mexico. The latter population migrates north in the spring to give birth in northern Mexico and Arizona.

Q: When was the lesser long-nosed bat first protected under the ESA, and why is it being delisted now?

A: There were thought to be fewer than 1,000 bats at only 14 known roosts range wide in Mexico and the Southwest United States when the bat was initially protected under the ESA in 1988. There are now an estimated 200,000 bats at 75 roosts range wide.

Q: How was the lesser long-nosed bat conserved and successfully recovered in the United States?

A: In the United States, most lesser long-nosed bat roosts and forage areas are managed by federal agencies, including the U.S. Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, National Park Service and the U.S. Army's Fort Huachuca. All have integrated management of lesser long-nosed bat forage plants – agaves, saguaros and organ pipe cactus – into their land use and resource management plans. Agencies are also aiding in deterring human disturbance of roost site caves and abandoned mines through site closures,

law enforcement and, together with state agencies and Bat Conservation International, the design, research and installation of bat gates that allow bat access to roost sites and eliminate human access.

Arizona residents also played a role in recovering lesser long-nosed bats. For a decade, [southern Arizona residents](#) have monitored night-time bat use of hummingbird feeders, providing biologists with useful data leading to a clearer understanding of the timing of bat migrations. They also provided biologists with the opportunity to capture bats and affix radio transmitters that aided in doubling the number of known new and existing roost sites.

Q: What conservation efforts have been conducted for the lesser long-nosed bat in Mexico? Is it still protected in Mexico?

A: In Mexico, tequila producers, who rely on and cultivate agaves, are increasingly integrating harvest and cultivation practices in recognition that agaves rely on bats for pollination and are even marketing “bat friendly tequila.” Historically, the control of vampire bats for rabies vector control and to reduce impacts to the livestock industry, destroyed roost sites of non-target bats like the lesser long-nosed bat. An active education campaign to change attitudes regarding the conservation of bats and improved bat identification is showing success in long-nosed bat conservation. As a result of reduced threats and the positive lesser long-nosed bat population response, the bat was removed Mexico’s endangered species list in 2015.

Q: What is the natural history of lesser long-nosed bats?

A: Some Mexican populations are year-round residents, leaving southern Mexico to find maternity roosts in northern Mexico and the U.S. Southwest, where arriving pregnant females have access to forage for birthing and nursing their pups. The bats’ migrations and maternity roosting are reliant on timing and location of the “nectar trail” – the blooming and fruiting season of agaves, saguaros, organ pipe cactus, and other flowering plants that provide their nutrient-rich nectar diet. The lesser long-nosed bat is a colonial roosting species that roosts in groups ranging from a few hundred to more than 100,000 roosting in caves, abandoned mines and large crevices and will travel up to 40 miles each night to reach their nocturnal foraging areas.

Q: How has education contributed to the recovery of the lesser long-nosed bat?

A: Attitudes regarding the conservation of bats and the understanding of the value bats provide to the ecosystem have improved as a result of education and outreach. This has resulting in support for bat conservation, including conservation of the lesser long-nosed bat. These conservation measures are expected to result in continued monitoring and research, future improvements in habitat related to roost protection and forage management such as continued outreach to the tequila industry, improved vampire bat control, installation of bat gates or fences protecting roosts, and a continued improved understanding of life history requirements of the lesser long-nosed bat.

Q: The lesser long-nosed bats in the United States are dependent on flowering plants along their migration route; how might climate change affect them?

A: The [SSA](#) considered the potential effects that climate change may have on the nectar trail and bat foraging, migration and roosting. Lesser long-nosed bats have shown the ability to adapt to adverse forage conditions, and the SSA finds that the lesser long-nosed bat's flexible and adaptive behaviors will allow it to remain viable under changing climatic conditions.

Q: Will protections and monitoring of the lesser long-nosed bat continue?

A: To ensure the lesser long-nosed bat continues to thrive following its delisting, the Service, together with conservation partners, drafted a Post-Delisting Monitoring Plan ([PDMP](#)) committing to monitoring the lesser long-nosed bats' continued roost occupancy, as well as monitoring and assessing the bats' forage availability. The PDMP will alert wildlife managers to any future threats to the bats' viability, such as the effects of climate change on forage resources and threats to known roost sites.