

Peer Review Plan for the Methodologies to Evaluate and Develop Minimum Recommended Survey Effort for Indiana Bats

About the document

Subject and Purpose: The Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) has proposed methodologies to develop a minimum level of effort to survey for Indiana bats in the summer. The methodologies include compilation of Indiana bat survey data sets, development of capture histories, estimation of detection and occupancy rates, and determination of level of effort based on those rates. The Service will consider results of the peer review to develop our recommended level of effort for our 2014 Indiana bat summer survey guidance.

Importance of Scientific Information: The Indiana bat (*Myotis sodalis*) was originally listed as being in danger of extinction under the Endangered Species Preservation Act of 1966 (32 FR 4001, March 11, 1967), and is currently listed as endangered under the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended. Therefore, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) has an obligation to conserve the Indiana bat. To help target conservation actions and to determine whether actions may impact Indiana bats, it is necessary to understand where the species occurs. While we have successfully monitored this species in the winter during the period when large concentrations of Indiana bats are clustered in caves and mines, it can be more challenging to detect Indiana bats in the summer when they are spread across the eastern half of the United States. The Service is in the process of revising recommended summer survey guidance. As part of this revision, we must ensure that the methods and levels of effort are adequate to detect the species and to ensure that we have confidence in negative results.

About the Peer Review Process

Type of review: Independent Peer Review - The Service will solicit comments from independent scientific reviewers who will submit individual written comments and responses to questions posed to all invited reviewers.

Number of reviewers: The Service will use 3-5 independent expert reviewers. Letters to a minimum of three peer reviewers requesting their participation will be sent as soon as possible.

Reviewer Expertise: Any one or combination of the following: development of bat survey methodologies, occupancy modeling, disease modeling.

Selection of Peer Reviewer: Peer reviewers will be selected based on their expertise with the subject matter and as described in the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Peer Review Guidelines, including not having been involved in development of the methodologies to develop a minimum level of effort to survey for Indiana bats in the summer, not previously provided comments on Indiana bat summer survey guidance, and not in a position to financially benefit from the review.

Management of Peer Reviewer: The peer review will be managed by the Service. Peer reviewers will be given 30 days to complete their reviews. The estimated start of review is June 2013. Peer review comments and Service response to those comments will be made available to the public on a Service website: (<http://www.fws.gov/midwest/endangered/mammals/inba/inbasummersurveyguidance.html>).

About Public Participation

The Service previously provided opportunities for public comment on the draft Indiana bat summer survey guidance. In response to comments received we are reviewing the proposed level of effort and methodologies for the 2014 field season. The public is invited to submit comments on this peer review plan by sending emails to Indiana_bat@fws.gov (please state "Minimum level of effort methodologies peer review" in subject line). Comments are due by May 31.

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