

# DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

news release

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## GRAY BAT ADDED TO ENDANGERED SPECIES LIST

The gray bat, thought to occur in 11 States, has been determined to be an endangered species, the Interior Department's U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service announced in the Federal Register.

Isolated colonies of this tiny flying mammal live in caves in the Southeastern and Central United States ranging from West Virginia and Missouri south to Florida. The bat and its habitat have been severely disrupted by human activity.

Bats, including the gray bat, are most active at night and are little known by most persons. Their erratic, fluttering flight, nocturnal habits, and association with witches, hobgoblins, and other Halloween characters have earned them a totally undeservedly bad public image. This tiny flying mammal feeds entirely on insects which are most active during summer nights, and it is harmless to man or his interests.

In addition, bats are very important to the ecosystem in which they live. Not only do they help keep the insect populations under control, but a whole host of other, little known but scientifically valuable cave creatures have evolved and depend upon the presence of bat colonies to provide the fertilizer and other organic material needed for their survival. If the bat colonies disappear, these other animals will go also.

The most important aspect of the gray bat's existence is its dependence on caves. It is perhaps the North American mammal most narrowly restricted to cave habitats. It hibernates in winter only in caves, with

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certain kinds of roosts and particularly cold air trapping characteristics. Approximately 65 percent of the entire species hibernates in a single cave in northern Alabama, and over 90 percent of the population is concentrated in only five caves.

Because of the concentration of the gray bat in a few particular caves and the problems confronting these caves, an "endangered" classification is considered necessary. In addition, the gray bat apparently requires large concentrations in order to maintain the temperature needed for the growth of embryos and young. Once its numbers dwindle beyond a certain point, the population would be unable to maintain itself.

An official determination that an animal is an endangered species affords it the protection of the Endangered Species Act of 1973. Among other things this means that it is unlawful for any person subject to the jurisdiction of the United States to:

- import or export the animal from the United States;
- take any such animal within the United States or on its territorial seas;
- take any such animal upon the high seas;
- possess, sell, deliver, carry, transport, or ship by any means any animals taken in violation of the above;
- deliver, receive, carry, transport, or ship any such animals in interstate or foreign commerce in the course of a commercial activity;
- sell or offer for sale in interstate or foreign commerce any such animal.

Those restrictions also apply to parts or products derived from the species.

Such a determination also makes it unlawful for any Federal agency to authorize, fund, or carry out any action that would jeopardize the continued existence of the species or destroy any habitat which is critical to the species' survival. Although no "critical habitat" has yet been determined for the gray bat, the Service is attempting to identify such locations and would appreciate learning of any areas that should be considered for such classification.

This action brings the number of endangered species to 428, of which 139 are found on United States territories or in U.S. territorial waters. Eleven animals now appear on the list of threatened species.

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