

INDIANA BAT AND NORTHERN LONG-EARED BAT SUMMER SURVEY GUIDELINES

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

(Revised 03/22/2022)

These FAQs help address questions related to changes to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service’s (Service) new/2022 version of the range-wide bat survey guidelines from the previous version (March 2020). The original FAQ document developed for the 2013 Indiana bat (IBAT) survey guidelines can be found here ([DrftIBatSummerSurveyGuidanceFAQ3Jan13.pdf \(fws.gov\)](#)). Those who opt to complete surveys should coordinate with their state’s Field Office for any questions or clarifications that are not addressed in this FAQ.

1. If a presence/absence survey was conducted for the IBAT and/or northern long-eared bat (NLEB) in 2021 (at the lower LOE), does the project proponent need to resurvey to meet the new LOE recommendations (see Table 1)? How long will the Service accept negative results from previously conducted surveys?

No, the Service will honor the results of previously approved survey(s) completed under recommended survey levels-of-effort (LOE) in place for both species at the time the survey was completed. As a reminder, negative survey results are valid for a period of 5-years (e.g., a survey completed on July 1st, 2021 will be accepted until May 15th, 2026).

TABLE 1. Summary of current survey LOEs for IBAT and NLEB. Changes and additions from the 2021 guidelines are highlighted in blue.

Species	Region	MIST NETTING (net nights)		ACOUSTICS (detector nights)	
		Linear (per km)	Non-Linear (per 123 ac.)	Linear (per km)	Non-Linear (per 123 ac.)
IBAT	Northeast & Appalachia RUs	10	42	4 (was 2)	10 (was 8)
	Midwest & Ozark- Central RUs	2	9		
NLEB	Range-wide	4	16	4	14

2. Why do the acoustic and mist net survey level of efforts (LOE) differ for the IBAT and NLEB now?

Because white-nose syndrome (WNS) has caused variable population impacts across the IBAT range, the Service has taken an adaptive management approach in setting appropriate LOEs for surveys. We have periodically collected and examined regional occupancy and detection data and revised the Range-wide IBAT Survey Guidelines and associated recommended summer survey LOE accordingly. The 2022 update to the survey guidelines considered recent IBAT and NLEB population declines due to WNS and relied upon additional survey data for both species. We previously lacked sufficient data to calculate species-specific survey LOE recommendations for the NLEB and therefore deferred to the IBAT LOE for NLEB. Through our partnership with the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS), we have now collected and analyzed sufficient NLEB data (2017-2021) to provide a specific LOE for the species and an updated acoustic LOE for IBAT. Also see *Methods to Evaluate and Develop Minimum Recommended Summer Survey Effort for Indiana Bats: White Paper* (Niver et al. 2014) and the subsequent *Addendum 1* (Niver et al. 2018) and *Addendum 2* (Armstrong et al. 2022) for further information.

3. Currently NLEBs are listed as threatened species with a 4(d) rule that exempts take for most activities. Can project proponents still use the 4(d) rule or do they need to follow the recommendations in the new IBAT and NLEB survey guidelines? What happens if NLEB is uplisted to endangered as currently proposed?

The Service has reassessed the listing status of the NLEB and has recently proposed (March 2022) to reclassify the species as endangered. The Service must publish a final rule on the NLEB's status by the end of November 2022 to meet a federal court order. Project proponents may continue to use the current 4(d) rule while the NLEB remains listed as a threatened species. If the reclassification is finalized, the 4(d) rule will be nullified as the Endangered Species Act does not allow application of 4(d) rules for species listed as endangered. Therefore, for proposed project activities that may impact NLEBs with a possibility of not being completed prior to the final listing decision in November, we recommend that project proponents discuss with field office(s) if surveys may be prudent to avoid potential delays to their project timelines resulting from a change to the NLEB's listing status. As always, it is best to coordinate with the appropriate field office(s) for further direction prior to conducting surveys.

4. If I am conducting surveys for both the Indiana and northern long-eared bat, do I have to double the mist net LOE or can I survey for both species using the higher LOE?

You can survey for both species using the higher LOE. If a mist-net or detector is sampling suitable habitat for both species, the mist-net/detector can count toward the level of effort for both.

Net placement along potential travel corridors (e.g., streams, logging trails, roads) as well as other edge habitats (e.g., other water sources, field edges) have traditionally been the

most common habitats sampled due to their ease of access. However, non-traditional net placement in interior forest habitats may also be productive, especially for NLEB and, to a lesser extent, IBAT (Carroll et al. 2002).

5. If I am conducting a survey in the range of both the IBAT and NLEB, can I assume presence for one species and only survey for the other? For example, can I assume NLEB are present and survey only to the lower LOE for IBAT?

Yes, you may assume presence for either species (or both, for that matter), but coordinate with the appropriate field office(s) prior to surveys. However, if a surveyor captures or acoustically detects the assumed present species during the survey it must be included in the survey report submitted to the Service.

6. If I am conducting a survey in the range of both the IBAT and NLEB and the field office/IPAC advises me that I am in known habitat for one species, can I survey for the other? For example, can I survey for NLEB if I am in known IBAT habitat?

Yes, you can survey for IBAT in known NLEB habitat. Also, contact the field office to determine if you are in the “outer-tier” of the documented known habitat because you may still have the option to survey for both species (see Appendix G).

7. Why is the requirement for linear and non-linear projects in the Midwest lower for mist netting than acoustics?

In 2021, the USGS and Service received additional information to inform the acoustic LOE and will evaluate the mist net level of effort as new data are available and resources allow. The mist netting LOEs for IBAT have not been reassessed since 2014.

8. The auto-ID software output shows that the Indiana bat is present during the survey on nights that were beyond the minimum required LOE for this species. Do I have to consider these results for IBAT for nights where detectors were left out beyond the minimum LOE for IBAT in order to meet NLEB LOE?

Yes. The minimum LOE was set as the lowest acceptable rather than the maximum LOE that should be conducted by surveyors. Survey effort beyond the minimum LOE is always encouraged and when completed, the survey findings beyond the minimum LOE need to be included in survey reports submitted to the Service.

9. The guidance says that I need to change net locations after 2 nights if the targeted species is not captured. If I am surveying for both species and I only captured one, do I have to move my nets?

If a net is successfully intercepting just one of the two target species, you may leave your nets in place but may need to add additional nets to cover the second species that is being targeted but not captured.

10. I have not captured the target species but would prefer to leave my nets in the same location for more than 2 nights. The locations chosen are the most likely to capture bats. Can I do that?

You can use the same locations, but you should wait at least 2 calendar nights before resuming netting at the same location. However, you must provide written justification in the survey report submitted to the Service why the net sites sampled after 2 unsuccessful nights continued to be used (i.e., explain why other sites within the project area were not acceptable for surveying).

11. What is the difference between a linear project and a non-linear project and how do I know which I should use?

Linear projects typically have a long and thin footprint and require tree removal in multiple 1-km sections (e.g., pipeline or transmission projects). Linear guidelines are not intended for projects whose footprint resembles a long, narrow polygon that is <1 km in length and impacts <123 acres (e.g. a new short access road cutting through a woodlot). Projects <1 km in length should use the non-linear guidelines.

12. Where can I find information on the current USFWS COVID guidelines for working with bats?

To mitigate the risk of humans transmitting SARS-CoV-2 to bats or coronavirus transmitted from bats to humans, the Service is following the “Guidance for FWS employees engaging in Activities with Bats” issued in a memorandum from the Service’s Director on June 12, 2020. As noted in the memorandum, where Service applicants or permittees had planned surveys or research involving direct contact with live bats, either on Service lands or non-Service lands, we recommend that they consider alternatives to handling live bats, where practicable. If you deem that handling of live bats is essential, then we ask you to follow the guidance in the Director’s memo, which is informed by the risk assessment conducted by the USGS Patuxent Wildlife Research Center and National Wildlife Health Center (Runge et al. 2020)(see also Cook et al. 2021). The assessment concluded that the risk of transmission of SARS-CoV-2 from infected bat workers to bats is nonnegligible. The risk assessment also concluded that proper use of PPE, including an N95 respirator or equivalent, is expected to significantly reduce the exposure risk. Therefore, we recommend that if you choose to handle live bats or to work in close proximity (within 6 feet) of live bats, that you use an N95 respirator. If an N95 respirator is not available, use the best available equivalent.

Your work should also be conducted in accordance with any additional guidance from the State in which you are conducting work and we recommend that you review the Centers of Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) website (see link below) for additional information and resources to help reduce the risk of SARS-CoV-2 spreading between people and wildlife.

<https://www.cdc.gov/healthypets/covid-19/wildlife.html>

Cook, J.D., E.H.C. Grant, J.T.H. Coleman, J.M. Sleeman, and M.C. Runge. 2021. Risks posed by SARS-CoV-2 to North American bats during winter fieldwork. *Conservation Science and Practice* n/a:e410. <<https://doi.org/10.1111/csp2.410>>.

Runge, M.C., E.H.C. Grant, J.T.H. Coleman, J.D. Reichard, S.E.J. Gibbs, P.M. Cryan, K. J. Olival, D.P. Walsh, D.S. Blehert, M.C. Hopkins, and J.M. Sleeman. 2020. Assessing the Risks Posed by SARS-CoV-2 in and via North American Bats—Decision Framing and Rapid Risk Assessment. U.S. Geological Survey Open-File Report 2020–1060:1-43. <<https://doi.org/10.3133/ofr20201060>>.