



Ozark Big-eared Bat

Oklahoma Ecological Service Field Office

Ozark Big-eared Bat

Corynorhinus townsendii ingens

Description

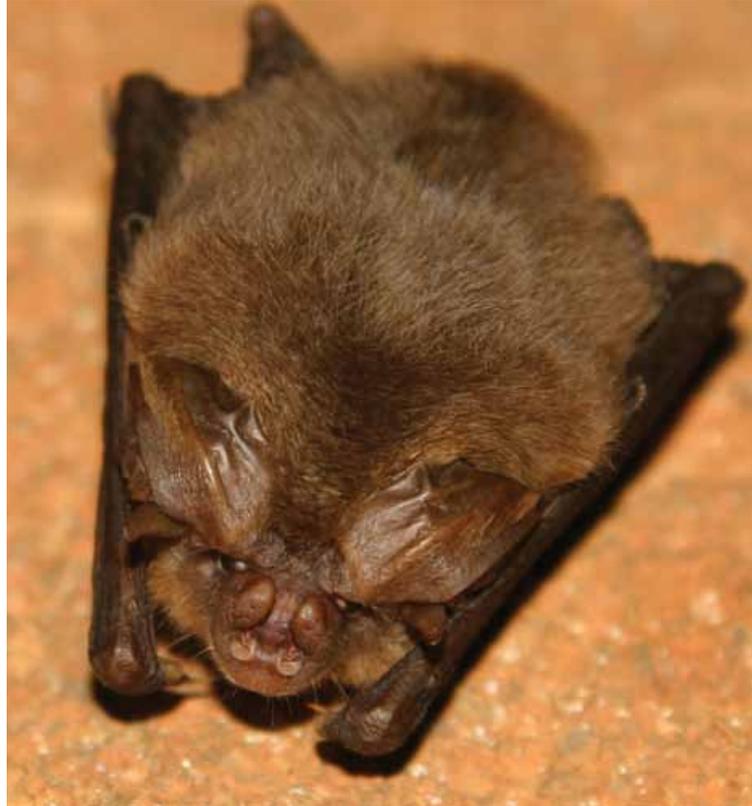
The Ozark big-eared bat is a medium-sized bat with distinctively large ears (1.2 – 1.5-inches long). Prominent lumps occur on either side of the face. The long fur is light to dark brown on the back and paler tan underneath. The bat is about 3.5 – 4.5 inches long, has a wingspan of 12 – 13 inches, and weighs from 5 – 13 grams.

Distribution

The current range of the Ozark big-eared bat includes the Ozark Highlands and Boston Mountains ecoregions of northeastern Oklahoma and northwestern and north-central Arkansas. The population is estimated to currently consist of about 1,800 individual bats.

Life History

The Ozark big-eared bat inhabits caves year-round. The caves typically are located in oak-hickory hardwood forests. Ozark big-eared bats mate during fall and winter. Colonies typically begin to form at hibernacula in October and November. Both sexes hibernate together in clusters that typically range from 2 – 135 individuals. Hibernating colonies gradually begin to break up in spring from April through May. Females also become pregnant during this time and slowly begin to congregate at warm maternity caves to give birth and rear their young over the summer. The formation of maternity colonies usually occurs between late April and early June. Ozark big-eared bats generally return to the same maternity caves each year. Females give birth to a single offspring in May or June after a two-three month gestation period. Young bats grow quite rapidly and are capable of flight at three weeks and are weaned by six weeks. Maternity colonies usually begin to break up in August. Males are solitary during the summer maternity period. The Ozark big-eared bat typically forages in edge and forested habitats. They primarily feed on moths, but also are known to eat beetles and other flying insects.



Ozark big-eared bat. Richard Stark / USFWS

Conservation

The Ozark big-eared bat was federally-listed as endangered on November 30, 1979 due to its small population size, reduced and limited distribution, and vulnerability to human disturbance. Threats to the Ozark big-eared bat include vandalism and human disturbance at maternity roosts and hibernacula, and the loss and fragmentation of foraging habitat. Conservation efforts include locating and protecting caves known to be used by the Ozark big-eared bat and foraging habitat around the caves. Recovery efforts also include educating the public about the danger of disturbing bats and their ecological importance.

What Can You Do to Help

Do not enter gated caves/mines or caves/mines with a sign at the entrance which indicates it is used by endangered bats. These gates and signs are in place to protect bat colonies that are sensitive to human disturbance. Disturbance during the sensitive maternity period can result in cave abandonment. Disturbance during early summer before the young

can fly can result in thousands of young becoming dislodged and falling to their deaths. Every arousal during hibernation is energetically expensive. Fat reserves required to sustain the bats are utilized to some extent during each winter arousal. Therefore, too many arousals during hibernation can exhaust a bat's limited fat reserves and result in mortality.

References

- U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service. 1995. Ozark Big-Eared Bat Revised Recovery Plan. Tulsa, OK. 50pp.
- U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service. 2008. Ozark Big-Eared Bat 5-Year Review. Tulsa, OK. 40pp.

For Further Information

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