

NOTE: Due to the federal government shut down, the Fish and Wildlife Service was unable to conduct its normal outreach distributions. This notice was published on October 2, 2013, in the Federal Register.

News Release

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

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U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Lists the Florida Bonneted Bat as Endangered

VERO BEACH, FL. – The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is listing the Florida bonneted bat as endangered under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). The bat is only found in south and southwest Florida, primarily in Charlotte, Lee, Collier, Monroe, and Miami-Dade Counties. Recent data also suggest the bat also is found in portions of Okeechobee and Polk Counties and possibly in some areas within Glades County.

The largest Florida bat, the Florida bonneted bat is non-migratory, eats insects, and is free-tailed, meaning its tail extends well beyond a short tail membrane. The name “bonneted bat” originates from its large, broad ears, which project forward over the eyes. The Florida bonneted bat uses forests, wetlands, and other natural habitats. It exists in residential and urban areas. At present, no active, natural roost sites are known. All active, known roosts are bat houses.

The Florida bonneted bat is threatened by habitat loss, degradation, and modification from human population growth and associated development and agriculture. Other threats include its small population size, restricted range, low fertility, weather-related events, such as hurricanes and lengthy cold snaps, removal or displacement by people, and potential impacts from pesticide applications, such as exposure and impacts to insects the bat eats.

The protection for the Florida bonneted bat under the ESA becomes effective November 2, 2013, 30 days after the rule is published in the October 2, 2013 Federal Register.

The decision to list the Florida bonneted bat is part of the Service's efforts to implement a court-approved work plan that resolves a series of lawsuits concerning the agency's ESA Listing Program. The intent of the agreement is to significantly reduce litigation-driven workloads and allow the agency to focus its resources on the species most in need of the ESA's protections over the next few years.

The Service opened a 60-day public comment period October 4, 2012, that allowed peer and public review and comment on the proposal to list the species as endangered. All relevant information received from the public, government agencies, the scientific community, industry, or any other interested parties was considered and addressed in the Service's final listing determination for the species.

More information is available online at <http://www.fws.gov/verobeach> and at <http://www.regulations.gov>, at Docket No. FWS-R4-ES-2012-0078.

The mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is working with others to conserve, protect, and enhance fish, wildlife, plants, and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. For more information on our work and the people who make it happen, visit www.fws.gov/southeast. Connect with us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/usfwssoutheast, follow our tweets at www.twitter.com/usfwssoutheast, watch our YouTube Channel at <http://www.youtube.com/usfws>, and download photos from our Flickr page at <http://www.flickr.com/photos/usfwssoutheast>.

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