

Protecting the Indiana Bat:

An Endangered Species

The Indiana Bat

According to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), the Indiana bat is just one of 1,300 endangered species in the US. Endangered species are animals and plants that are in danger of becoming extinct. Many of these species are endangered because human activities threaten their habitat.

The Indiana bat is quite small, weighing only one-quarter of an ounce (about the weight of three pennies). In flight, the wingspan is 9 to 11 inches. Its fur is dark brown to black.

They hibernate during winter in caves or abandoned mines. After a six-month hibernation, Indiana bats migrate to their summer habitat in wooded areas where they usually roost under loose tree bark on dead or dying trees. Males will roost alone or in small groups, while pregnant females roost in maternity colonies of 100 bats or more.

A female bat gives birth to only one pup per year. The pups stay with the maternity colony throughout their first summer. Southern Iowa is home to some of these Indiana bat maternity colonies.

The Endangered Species Act requires the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to consult with the FWS to ensure the actions we authorize, fund or carry out do not jeopardize the Indiana bat, or any other threatened species.

Keeping the Indiana bat safe

When working with NRCS on conservation construction projects, landowners within the Indiana Bat's range (see map below) will need to make sure their project area doesn't include any Indiana bat habitat areas.

Before construction can begin, someone from the local NRCS office, or trained by NRCS staff, must visit the site and assess the potential for Indiana bat habitat.

The criteria for determining potential Indiana bat habitat was written by the FWS. According to the FWS, potential Indiana bat habitat may exist if a large or well connected deciduous woodland with 35% or greater tree cover contains suitable habitat trees and is within 1/2 mile of a permanent water source.

What are suitable trees?

Suitable trees are those with crawl spaces for the bats between the bark and the trunk or branches of the tree. Suitable trees would be shagbark hickory or other hardwoods that are dead, or have dead branches with loose bark.

When can I work on my project?

If suitable habitat occurs within a project area, then restrictions on tree clearing may be necessary to avoid adverse effects to the Indiana bat. NRCS or the landowner should consult with the FWS early in the planning process to develop a project plan that avoids adverse effects to the Indiana Bat, as consultation can take up to 30-days.

Questions?

If you have questions or concerns about this process, contact your local NRCS office.

Indiana Bat Habitat Areas

