Indiana Bat

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IDENTIFICATION: The Indiana bat (*Myotis sodalis*) has fur ranging from nearly black to chestnut on its back with lighter gray or cinnamon fur on the belly. Individual hairs have dark bases with lighter tips. It is one of the smallest bats in the genus *Myotis*, weighing about a quarter ounce and being 1 - 2 inches long. Its wingspan is about 9.5 – 10.5 inches. They hibernate in large clusters, primarily in caves and mines during the winter. For hibernation, they require cool, humid caves with steady temperatures under 50 degrees Fahrenheit, but above freezing. There are very few caves that meet these requirements within the species range. They disperse from hibernation caves in the spring and form separate male and female/juvenile colonies. Females form maternal colonies that roost under loose bark of trees, usually near water or at the edges of forested areas. Males roost alone or in small groups. Research in Alabama suggests that large pine snags with exfoliating bark are frequently used as roost sites.

IMPORTANCE: The Indiana bat was federally listed as an Endangered species on 3-11-1967. A recovery plan has been developed and focused efforts on hibernaculum and summer roost site protection. These bats are also susceptible to white-nose syndrome which has caused significant mortality in Northern long-eared bats.
See northern long-eared bat Management Information Sheet for additional information about white-nose syndrome.

FORESTRY CONSIDERATIONS: The greatest threat forestry activities pose is disturbance of hibernating colonies in roost caves. A buffer area of undisturbed forest should be maintained around the entrances of hibernation caves. If roosting bats are found during harvest or site clearing activities, protect the tree and area around it until a determination of the bat species is made. Areas containing Indiana bat roost sites should be managed to ensure an adequate number of roost trees, and sufficient wooded area within the bat's home range to support the colony. Maintaining forested buffers around streams, roads, and strips that connect larger patches of forest is important. Retain snags with exfoliating bark unless it causes safety or fire concerns. The use of herbicides and pesticides in areas adjacent to foraging and roost sites should be carefully controlled and monitored for unanticipated adverse effects. Landowners and managers should have a basic understanding of the Endangered Species Act of 1973 and potential impacts of forestry activities on Indiana bat populations and habitats.

DISTRIBUTION BY COUNTY: Indiana bats are presently known to occur in Blount, Cleburne, DeKalb, Jackson, Lawrence, Marshall, Morgan and Shelby counties in Alabama, but can possibly occur in any county in the top third of the state.

Photo Credit: Ann Froschauer, USFWS

This information has been provided by the Alabama Forestry Commission.
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