



**SIERRA  
CLUB**

**IOWA CHAPTER**

## **PROTECTING THE INDIANA BAT HABITAT IN IOWA**

The southern half of Iowa is Indiana bat habitat. The bat is present in Iowa from April through October. The bat migrates to a warmer climate during the winter months where it hibernates in caves in Indiana, Missouri, and Kentucky.

The bat is currently on the federal endangered species list. The Indiana bat population has declined in significant numbers. One of the reasons that the Indiana bat was listed as an endangered species is that the wintering caves have been disturbed, leading to loss of the bats. The bats hibernate in colonies of up to 50,000 individuals.

In the summer the Indiana bat lives along small to medium rivers and streams that are slow moving with riparian woods, in wooded areas in the drainage areas of those rivers and streams, and upland forested areas. The female and young bats roost under the loose bark of trees, especially hickory trees. In the summer the bats are colonial, but in smaller sizes of colonies than in the winter. The bats eat flying insects, which is beneficial in reducing the number of those insects.



*Indiana bat. Photo by Adam Mann, US Fish and Wildlife Service*



*Hickory trees, with their loose bark, are ideal habitat for the Indiana bat. Photo by Pam Mackey-Taylor*

Part of the endangered species law is a requirement to protect the critical habitat. Even though the winter caves are protected, unfortunately the summer habitat is not protected from destruction. The United States Fish and Wildlife Service allows removing the trees used by the bat between October 15 and March 31, as long as not all of the trees are felled. The bats will return to their summer home, only to find that the trees have been removed. It would be like one of us going on vacation and finding our home was destroyed while we were away.

The Indiana bat has been suffering population declines due to a fatal disease called white-nose syndrome.

You can help by contacting the Fish and Wildlife Service and ask that the summer habitat for the Indiana bat summer be designated as critical habitat. Write to U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Endangered Species, 5275 Leesburg Pike, Falls Church, VA 22041

### Sources

[www.fws.gov/midwest/Endangered/mammals/inba/index.html](http://www.fws.gov/midwest/Endangered/mammals/inba/index.html)  
"Indiana Bat - *Myotis sodalist*", Iowa Department of Natural Resources  
[www.iowaagriculture.gov/livingOnTheEdge/IndianaBat.asp](http://www.iowaagriculture.gov/livingOnTheEdge/IndianaBat.asp)