



## LITTLE BROWN MYOTIS, NORTHERN MYOTIS AND TRI-COLORED BAT

The Government of Canada has added three species of bats to the List of Wildlife Species at Risk in Canada (also known as Schedule I of the *Species at Risk Act*). These three bats species - the Little Brown Myotis (*Myotis lucifugus*), the Northern Myotis (*Myotis septentrionalis*) and the Tri-colored Bat (*Perimyotis subflavus*) - have been listed as Endangered, as their survival is imminently threatened by a deadly and highly contagious disease, White-nose Syndrome (WNS).

### WHY ARE THESE BATS ENDANGERED?

These three bat species are undergoing incredibly rapid population declines due to a wildlife disease known as White-nose Syndrome (WNS). The disease is named for the white fungus that grows on the muzzle of affected bats while they hibernate. Bats affected by WNS arouse frequently during hibernation, depleting their limited resources (stored water, electrolytes and fat) and making them more likely to die. The population declines that have been documented for these species are considered by some experts to be the most rapid decline of mammals ever documented anywhere in the world.

The fungus that causes WNS was likely introduced to North America by people who visited caves in Europe and subsequently visited caves in the United States. The disease has now been confirmed in five provinces - Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island. The fungus is likely spread by contact between individual bats, their environments and by people who carry the fungus spores on their clothing, equipment, footwear or by other means.

### WHY ARE THESE BATS IMPORTANT?

These three bat species, and bats in general, provide a broad range of ecological goods and services, most notably, important pest control services which likely contribute to crop and forest yields in Canada. These species each consume significant quantities of insects that damage forests and a variety of Canadian crops, including wheat, barley, corn, oats, canola, flaxseed, and other oilseeds. The pest control services offered by these three species of bats also results in avoided expenditures on insecticides. It can be safely assumed that the absence of these bats would have a negative impact on Canadian agricultural and forestry sectors, and to property owners and municipalities either via reduced crop yields or costs associated with additional insecticide use.

More broadly, a self-sustaining healthy ecosystem, with its various elements in place, including the bat species, contributes positively to Canadians' livelihoods, health and well-being. Canada's natural heritage is an integral part of our national identity and history. It is valuable to Canadians not only to preserve species in the short term, but also for future generations to enjoy.

## HOW DOES THE *SPECIES AT RISK ACT* PROTECT THESE BATS?

In a province, the addition of these bats to Schedule I of the *Species at Risk Act* (SARA) means that these species are legally protected where they are found on **federal lands**. In a territory, this means that these species are legally protected where they are found on federal lands that are under the authority of the Minister of the Environment or the Parks Canada Agency. These legal protections (known as the General Prohibitions) prohibit:

- the killing, harming, harassing, capturing or taking of an individual of one of the three bat species;
- the possession, collection, buying, selling or trading of an individual or any part or derivative of an individual of one of the three species; and
- the damage or destruction of the residence of one or more individuals of one of the three species.

As required under SARA, a recovery strategy will be developed to identify actions required to address the threats to these species. It will also identify critical habitat to the extent possible. If this is not possible, a schedule of studies to identify critical habitat will be included in the recovery strategy.

Under SARA, **federal land** includes, but is not limited to: land that belongs to Her Majesty in right of Canada, or land that Her Majesty in Right of Canada has powers to dispose of, and all waters and airspace above the land, for example: national parks, military training areas, national wildlife areas, First Nations reserve lands, Canada's territorial sea and internal waters.

## WHO WILL BE AFFECTED BY THIS LISTING?

Canadians and Canadian businesses operating on federal lands could be impacted by the addition of these species to Schedule I. The sectors most likely to be affected include:

- Wind energy
- Pest control
- Mining
- Speleologists/Caving/ecotourism and parks with cave attractions
- Forestry
- Bat researchers
- Aboriginal communities
- Federal government departments and agencies

## DO I NEED A PERMIT?

If your activities take place on federal land in a province, or on lands in a territory that are under the authority of the Minister of the Environment or the Parks Canada Agency, and those activities could contravene the General Prohibitions described above, you will need to apply for a permit under SARA.

Permits will be considered on a case-by-case basis. The permit may only be issued where:

- the activity is scientific research relating to the conservation of the species and conducted by qualified persons;
- the activity benefits the species or is required to enhance its chance of survival in the wild; or
- affecting the species is incidental to the carrying out of the activity.

In addition, permits may also only be issued where:

- all reasonable alternatives to the activity that would reduce the impact on the species have been considered and the best solution has been adopted;
- all feasible measures will be taken to minimize the impact of the activity on the species or its critical habitat or the residences of its individuals; and
- the activity will not jeopardize the survival or recovery of the species.

More information on the SARA permitting process - including contact information - is available on the Species at Risk (SAR) Public Registry at [http://www.sararegistry.gc.ca/sar/permit/permits\\_e.cfm#permits](http://www.sararegistry.gc.ca/sar/permit/permits_e.cfm#permits).

## WHAT CAN I DO TO HELP PROTECT THESE BATS?

Accessing a cave or inactive mine on federal lands at any time of year may present a risk of a contravention of the General Prohibitions under SARA.

When accessing caves or inactive mines, you may inadvertently spread the fungus that causes WNS. If the area is on federal land, this could constitute harm to the bats and / or damage or destruction of the residence, which is prohibited. If you must access a cave or mine on federal lands, you may wish to apply for a permit under SARA.

You may wish to refrain from accessing caves and inactive mines, especially during the winter months when bats may be using these areas to hibernate. Bats awaken easily during hibernation, and this depletes their energy stores and can cause them to die of starvation before the winter is over. By accessing caves or inactive mines during the winter months, you may inadvertently awaken them, and this could constitute harm and / or harassment of one of these bats, which is prohibited under SARA on federal land.

The most important thing you can do to help the bats is to ensure that you do not further spread the spores of the fungus that cause WNS.

Before entering a cave or mine anywhere at any time of year, you should employ decontamination

practices known to be effective in destroying the spores of the fungus which causes WNS. These spores are very difficult to destroy. You can help by decontaminating your boots, clothes and gear especially when visiting multiple caves or inactive mines so that you avoid spreading WNS from one location to another.

You should also leave bats undisturbed when they are found. Consider offering the bats an alternate residence by building and installing a bat box.

The Government of Canada will continue to work cooperatively with Canadians to protect these three species of bats. Stewardship activities that you would like to undertake to help these species of bats may be eligible for funding under one of the Government of Canada's stewardship programs, such as the Habitat Stewardship Program or the Aboriginal Fund for Species at Risk. For more information, please visit <http://www.ec.gc.ca/nature/default.asp?lang=En&n=FB5A4CA8-1>.

### **WARNING**

This factsheet and any documents it refers to are intended to provide general guidance only with respect to the *Order Amending Schedule I to the Species at Risk Act*, adding three species of bats, the Little Brown Myotis (*Myotis lucifugus*), the Northern Myotis (*Myotis septentrionalis*) and the Tri-colored Bat (*Perimyotis subflavus*) to Schedule I as Endangered. They are not a substitute for the *Species at Risk Act*. In the event of any inconsistency between the factsheet, its accompanying documents and the Act, the latter prevails. The official legal publication of the *Species at Risk Act* can be found at: <http://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/S-15.3/>. Individuals with specific legal concerns are urged to seek advice from their legal counsel.

## **WHERE CAN I FIND OUT MORE INFORMATION?**

You can find more information on SARA and these three bat species by visiting the SAR Public Registry at <http://www.registrep-sararegistry.gc.ca/default.asp?lang=En&n=073DC653-1>. More information on WNS is available on the Canadian Wildlife Health Cooperative website at [http://www.cwhc-rscf.ca/data\\_products\\_wns.php](http://www.cwhc-rscf.ca/data_products_wns.php).

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