



Lesser Long-nosed Bats

Importance

The lesser long-nosed bat (*Leptonycteris curasoae yerbabuena*) is an endangered nectar feeding bat that inhabits the Rincon Mountain District (RMD) of Saguaro National Park in late summer and early fall. These bats are migratory, and spend winters in Mexico. When in the U.S., lesser long-nosed bats feed primarily on saguaro flowers, nectar, and fruit, agave, and even at hummingbird feeders in urban areas. These mammals are important to the Sonoran desert ecosystem because they help pollinate the saguaro cactus and other plants.

Quick Facts

Small numbers of lesser long-nosed bats have been known to share a bat roost in the park during the summer. Recently, however, biologists discovered many more of these bats using the roost later in the year, before they head back to Mexico for the winter. Park managers believe the bats that have learned to forage at hummingbird feeders in Tucson are now using this roost, which is relatively close to town. This site is monitored regularly now to better understand lesser long-nosed bat population dynamics and movements at both local and regional scales.



Quick Facts

- Lesser long-nosed bats feed on and pollinate saguaro and agave flowers at night. Saguaro flowers are white so they are more visible at night, and the flowers produce a strong fragrance that lures the bats.
- This species was listed as endangered in 1998, in part due to the loss of a large “maternity colony” in nearby Colossal Cave. When this privately owned cave was opened for public tours, a ventilation system was installed to get rid of the bat smell. This changed environmental conditions in the cave so it was no longer suitable for the bats.



Photographed visiting a household hummingbird feeder near Saguaro National Park. Photo by Linda DeVon

Discussion

Because they prefer to roost in large colonies, especially when raising their young, lesser long-nosed bats are particularly vulnerable to (roosting) habitat loss. Park biologists will continue to monitor and study this species so they may be effectively protected and hopefully, someday removed from the endangered species list.

More Information

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Saguaro Website: <http://www.nps.gov/sagu/naturescience>
Southwest Learning Center: <http://www.southwestlearning.org>
I&M Sonoran Desert Network: <http://science.nature.nps.gov/im/inventory>