



Background:

Gray bat (*Myotis grisescens*) is a federally-listed endangered species. In 2005, Service and State biologists and others working towards the recovery of the endangered gray bat met in St. Louis, Missouri, to identify high priority recovery tasks for the species. The two main obstacles preventing consensus that the species is recovered were the lack of a recent, range wide survey of bats and lack of an accepted inventory and monitoring protocol (the Endangered Species Act requires a species to be monitored for 5 years following delisting). In addition, the assembled experts felt that certain other conservation actions were necessary to fully meet recovery plan goals. Those actions formed the basis of this Legacy-funded project.

Objective:

This project sought to engage several partners and their assets to complete the final conservation efforts to recover gray bat. The project engaged the organizations in a partnership to accomplish remaining protection and validation of hibernacula and a survey of three maternity sites in TN. Pearson's Cave was in private ownership and the site's protection needed to be secured. Bellamy Cave owned by The Nature Conservancy (TNC) was un-gated and unsecure. Access stairs to Jesse James' Cave were rotted and a safety hazard. Hibernacula site population surveys information required updating. Finally a report to U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) on the status of gray bat to support recovery and delisting was needed.

Summary of Approach:

Field work was initiated to compile needed data on the population of gray bats in TN during the summer. Field biologists surveyed caves, counting bats exiting the caves and assessing cave usage and population size by the presence of guano and/or dead juveniles. Beyond these sites, DoD biologists gathered data for a comprehensive report to USFWS on the status of the species throughout its range to support recovery and delisting. Finally, project partners determined the best way to secure the important sites within TN, which involved negotiating the purchase of Pearson's Cave and the gating of Bellamy Cave.

Benefit:

Gray bat occurs at 7 Army installations and several other DoD installations in the south central United

States. If the gray bat is recovered, current constraints on military installations will be reduced or eliminated. Constraints that could be reduced include restrictions on the use of smokes and obscurants, restrictions related to noise and soldier activities, and restrictions related to habitat alteration (e.g. range construction). These issues are particularly relevant to the military readiness activities at Forts McClellan (Alabama), Leonard Wood (Missouri), Campbell (Kentucky), Knox (Kentucky), Redstone Arsenal (Alabama) and Arnold Air Force Base (Tennessee).

Accomplishments:

Project biologists surveyed about 5-10 high priority summer maternity sites in TN, and completed winter reviews of the condition and population of 3 caves in MO, 3 caves in TN, and 3 caves in AR. In addition, update surveys were conducted at 21 hibernacula sites. With this and other data, the Army produced a comprehensive report on the status of the species within DoD managed lands and provided the information to the USFWS in 2007 for consideration when reviewing the species for possible delisting.



Pearson's Cave Gate
(Courtesy of TNC)



(Courtesy of USFWS)

Project partners were also eventually able to negotiate the purchase of Pearson's Cave and it is now under the protection of TNC. In addition, project funds were used to gate Bellamy Cave in 2007, thus protecting it from intruders. Finally, project partners removed the rotted stairs At Jesse James' Cave, thus removing a safety hazard and further discouraging public access to the site.

Contact Information:

Lewis Gorman III
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
4401 N. Fairfax Dr.
Arlington, VA 22203
703-358-1911
lewis_gorman@fws.gov

