

IDENTIFICATION: The gray bat (*Myotis grisescens*) is one of the largest bats in its genus with a body length of 3.5 to 4.5 inches and a wing span of 11-12 inches. The bat's fur is uniform in color, often gray or brown, this helps to distinguish it from other species of *Myotis*.



These bats live solely in caves located in limestone karst habitats. They do not inhabit abandoned barns, attics, or other structures as do other species of bats. Gray bats use warm caves in the summer where they establish maternal and bachelor colonies. In the winter they relocate and hibernate in a few small cold caves. The largest colonies of gray bats are located in northeast Alabama around the Lake Guntersville area. Gray bats are insect eaters and often hunt and feed over water. Preferred summer caves are typically close to a lake or river to allow for easy access to foraging habitat.

IMPORTANCE: The [gray bat](#) was [federally listed as an endangered species](#) by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service on 4-28-1976. The recovery plan for gray bats indicates that the most important hibernacula should be protected through agreements with property owners or outright acquisition by conservation agencies. Sauta Cave, the most important summer cave for gray bats, located in northeast Alabama was purchased by the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service and is permanently managed for the benefit of this species. These bats are also susceptible to white-nose syndrome but they appear to be more resistant to the virus than other species such as Northern long-eared bats.

FORESTRY CONSIDERATIONS: Gray bats can be adversely affected by forestry operations if their roost sites are disturbed or if wooded corridors that provide them with cover on nightly flights between roosting and feeding sites are removed. Protect caves inhabited by gray bats by leaving a buffer of undisturbed forest around their entrances. Wooded travel corridors between roosting and foraging sites should also be protected. Also, 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 gray bat populations and habitats.

DISTRIBUTION BY COUNTY: The Natural Heritage Section of the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources database indicates that Gray bats have been documented in the following counties: Bibb, Blount, Calhoun, Cleburne, Colbert, Conecuh, Covington, Cullman, DeKalb, Etowah, Jackson, Jefferson, Lauderdale, Lawrence, Limestone, Madison, Marshall, Morgan, Shelby, Tuscaloosa and Winston. The U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service believes they also may inhabit Cherokee, Chilton, Clay, Coosa, Escambia, Franklin, Hale, Marion, St. Clair and Talladega counties.

Photo Credit: Dottie Brown, Ecological Solutions, Inc.



This information has been provided by the Alabama Forestry Commission.

For more information, please visit: www.forestry.alabama.gov