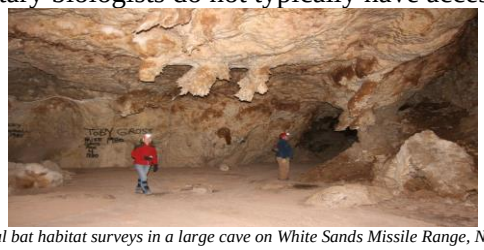
Bat Roost Habitat Assessment and Conservation Planning

Project # 12-142

Background:

There is a great need for military installations to determine the locations and types of bat roost habitat occupied or potentially available to bats. In New Mexico, 65% of bat species expected to occur on military installations are considered sensitive species by the state. Therefore, knowledge of roost locations is necessary to properly manage for these species and prevent federal listing that could impact the military mission. Bat Conservation International (BCI) and DoD have partnered to identify and survey potential roost habitat at military installation sites throughout New Mexico. Results will be used to produce management recommendations that can be incorporated into each installation's INRMP. Management plans will include the location and types of roosts, bat species that use them, seasonal use, priorities for roost conservation, and recommendations for preventing the introduction or spread of White-nose Syndrome.

This project was developed from discussions in the DoD Southwest regional TER-S Workshop and in the DoD INRMP/SWAP Workshop in Albuquerque, and is being conducted in accordance with the 2006 MOU between DoD and BCI. This project is coordinated with the NM Department of Game and Fish to ensure that recommendations are consistent with the NM State Wildlife Action Plan and suitable for integration into each installation's INRMP. Work will be contracted to BCI, which has the technical expertise to assess bat roost habitat, especially in treacherous areas where military biologists do not typically have access.



Internal bat habitat surveys in a large cave on White Sands Missile Range, NM.

Objective:

In the final year of the project, the objective is to finish surveying potential bat roost habitats at installations in New Mexico. The primary efforts will be on summarizing the results, analyzing data, determining management and conservation priorities, and making final recommendations to installations for their NRMPS.

Summary of Approach:

Bat Conservation International continues to use existing AML, geological, and GIS databases to locate and survey subterranean features. New features located during surveys are documented and added to existing databases. All features will be (and have been) internally surveyed, where it is (was) safe to do so. Bat use is determined in as much detail as possible, as well as roost characteristics. All data will be compiled into a custom database (underway). Data will be analyzed and installation specific management plans will be created. A subset of suitable sites (mines) will be identified for use for training in subterranean warfare by members of our armed forces.

Benefit:

Each participating installation will receive survey results and management recommendations that can be incorporated into each installation's Integrated Natural Resources Management Plan (INRMP), helping to fill information gaps and contribute to range sustainability and readiness. The process will serve as a model that other installations can use to assess and conserve its bat roost habitat. Because many species of bats are species of concern and/or state listed, the assessment and conservation of roost sites is intended to help prevent federal listing of any of these species that, if listed, could compromise the military mission. With a substantial increase in training and testing upcoming at installations in New Mexico, it is even more important to conserve these bat species to reduce the potential for future conflicts with missions. By identifying safety hazards, and establishing priorities for mine closures (should the need arise), this project also makes a positive contribution with respect to troop safety.

Accomplishments:

To date, 770 features have been assessed at WSMR, 19 features at Ft. Bliss, and 58 features at Kirtland AFB. From dry desert scrub on the valley floor, to the pine forests of the mountaintops, there exists a wide variety of bat habitat on DoD lands. A total of 12 significant roost sites have been located. The final project presentation will be given at the NMFWA Meeting in Denver, CO in 2014.

Contact Information:

Jason Corbett, Conservation Biologist
Bat Conservation International
P.O. Box 162603, Austin TX 78716
jcorbett@batcon.org