



Nora Lea, Kanawha State Forest's very own Northern Long-eared Bat  
Courtesy, All Star Ecology

# Kanawha State Forest Bats : One little, two little,...

The incredible diversity of bats in Kanawha State Forest (at least nine species) reflects the legacy of care that WVDNR staff and friends of the forest have given this green gem, now surrounded by so much destroyed and degraded bat habitat.

Some bat species use KSF solely in the warm season, preferring to migrate south for winter. Hoary Bats and Evening Bats always migrate.



The Hoary Bat, the largest bat in West Virginia, migrates south for winter.  
From <http://www.factzoo.com/sites/all/img/mammals/bats/hoary-bat-wings-flight.jpg>



Another migrant, the Evening Bat often roosts in hollow trees and buildings.  
From <http://www.outdooralabama.com/sites/default/files/watchable-wildlife/images/evening%20bats.jpg>

Others hibernate in WV and surrounding states with suitable hibernacula: limestone caves, abandoned deep mines, deep rock fissures, leaf piles, hollow trees, buildings, and other human structures. Different species have different preferences for hibernacula. Big Brown Bats are often found hibernating in buildings.



The Big Brown Bat often roosts in human structures in West Virginia.  
Photo courtesy of Doug Wood.

The declining Little Brown Bat, Tri-colored Bat (threatened), Indiana Bat, and Northern Long-eared Bat (both endangered) (see image of Nora Lea at top left) prefer to hibernate in caves and mines. Two of those four, Tri-colored and Northern Long-eared, seem to prefer hibernating by themselves or huddled with only a few companions. The

other two species tend to huddle in large clusters. The species most negatively impacted by White-nose Syndrome are those that prefer to hibernate in caves and mines.

The Tri-colored Bat is the most widespread hibernator in West Virginia.  
From <https://mammals.carnegiennh.org/pa-mammals/eastern-pipistrelle-pipistrellus-subflavus/>



The Little Brown Bat sometimes hibernates in large colonies in West Virginia.  
From <http://wildlife.ohiodnr.gov/portals/wildlife/Species%20and%20Habitats/Species%20Guide%20Index/Images/littlebrownbat.jpg>

The Indiana Bat, an endangered species, is known to establish maternity colonies in Kanawha State Forest and hibernacula in the region.  
From [http://copperheadconsulting.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/DSC\\_07892.jpg?w=560](http://copperheadconsulting.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/DSC_07892.jpg?w=560)



Eastern Red Bats most often hibernate in leaf piles, woody debris, or in the duff at the bases of hollow trees.

Abundant fallen leaves and woody debris provide ample Red Bat hibernation sites.  
Photo courtesy of Doug Wood.



Likely to overwinter in leaf piles, this Eastern Red Bat mother nurses her quadruplets.  
Kelly Bostian from <https://www.tulsaworld.com/sportsextra/outdoors/bostiancolumn/>



Silver-haired Bats typically hibernate in hollow trees in old-growth forests or they migrate to more southern climes.



Silver-haired Bats prefer roosting in old-growth forests. Some hibernate in WV.  
From [https://naturalunseenhazards.files.wordpress.com/2011/09/lasionycteris\\_noctivagansi\\_rb46silverhairedbat.jpg](https://naturalunseenhazards.files.wordpress.com/2011/09/lasionycteris_noctivagansi_rb46silverhairedbat.jpg)

KSF hikers visit a potential old-growth winter hibernaculum of the Silver-haired Bat.  
Photo courtesy of Dianne Anestis.



Other bat species may occasionally use KSF. As of 2019, the WVDNR had tallied 14 species that have been observed in one place or another in WV, but few locales are known to support the high bat diversity of KSF. Some characteristics that make this public parkland so suitable for bats include: (1) The wide variety of vegetation that supports an abundance of insects for bat food, (2) clean streams and wetlands that serve as home to the bats' aquatic insect prey, (3) plenty of day roosting habitats (loose bark, leaf clusters, and cliff fissures), and (4) numerous abandoned deep mines and other hibernation sites.

Add to this list the long-term commitment by land managers and citizens to conserve the Forest wildlife, and we have the recipe that makes Kanawha State Forest a haven for its furry, winged denizens—BATS.

To learn more, read this sign's other side.