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Lawsuit Launched to Protect Critical Habitat for Florida Bonneted Bat, Again

Bats' Homes Vulnerable to Sea-Level Rise, Habitat Destruction

ST. PETERSBURG, Fla.— The Center for Biological Diversity, Tropical Audubon Society and the Miami Blue Chapter of the North American Butterfly Association filed a [formal notice](#) today of their intent to sue the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for failing to designate lifesaving critical habitat for Florida's largest bat.

Related Information:

[Learn more about the Florida bonneted bat.](#)

"The Service needs to protect these bats' homes from sprawl," said Jaclyn Lopez, Florida director at the Center for Biological Diversity. "Florida bonneted bats cannot survive the onslaught of sea-level rise, development and pesticide use in south Florida unless their habitat is protected."

Pesticide use and development nearly drove the species to extinction. The bat finally received endangered status under the Endangered Species Act thanks to Center [litigation](#). The conservation groups [sued](#) in 2018 to compel the Service to propose critical habitat, but the Service still has not finalized the proposal.

Florida bonneted bats roost in tree cavities and on artificial structures and forage for insects over open spaces like wetlands and lakes. There are 26 known colonies of bats on 11 roost sites. Just 1 foot of sea-level rise will inundate four roost sites.

"The Florida bonneted bat, besides being the rarest bat species in the U.S., offers through its critical habitat designation an umbrella of protection for many other exceedingly rare pine rockland species," said Dennis Olle, president of the Miami Blue Chapter of the North American Butterfly Association.

"The protection of this Florida endemic species can only be ensured if its critical habitat is designated, a measure that is long overdue. This iconic bat deserves the protections granted by the Endangered Species Act — protections it will need to face the multiple threats to its very survival," said Paola Ferreira, executive director of Tropical Audubon Society.

Animals with federally protected critical habitat are more than twice as likely to be moving toward recovery than species without it. Federal agencies that fund or permit projects in critical habitat must consult with the Service to ensure habitat is not adversely modified.

Learn more about the [Florida bonneted bat](#).

The Center for Biological Diversity is a national, nonprofit conservation organization with more than 1.7 million members and online activists dedicated to the protection of endangered species and wild places.

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