

Lesser Long-nosed Bat



ILLUSTRATION BY ZACKERY ZINNAK

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grooms its fur with its feet and licks the pollen from its claws. This bat doesn't normally need to drink water because its diet of nectar, pollen and fruit is water-rich; therefore, it doesn't need to roost or feed near water sources. A strong flier, the lesser long-nosed bat can commute far distances between roosts and foraging areas.

SCIENTIFIC NAME: The scientific name *Leptonycteris yerbabuena* comes from the Greek words *nycteris*, meaning “bat,” and *leptos*, meaning “fine, thin or delicate,” referring to this bat's slender snout. The original type specimens were obtained from a cave near Yerbabuena in the state of Guerrero, Mexico.

DESCRIPTION: A medium-sized bat with forearms 51–54 mm long, the lesser long-nosed bat is one of four North American bats with a nose leaf. It can be distinguished easily from the other two leaf-nosed bats that occur in Arizona because it lacks a conspicuous tail and has a greatly reduced tail membrane. The lesser long-nosed bat has large eyes and reddish-brown fur. There's little difference in body mass between adult males and females. At approximately 25 grams, a lesser long-nosed bat's weight is equivalent to about five Hershey's kiss chocolates.

DISTRIBUTION: In the United States, the lesser long-nosed bat is known only from the Picacho Mountains in southern Arizona southwest to the Agua Dulce Mountains and southeast to the Chiricahua Mountains. The range extends into southwestern New Mexico and throughout drier parts of Mexico to Guatemala, El Salvador and Honduras. This

bat is a seasonal visitor in the northern parts of its range. It does not hibernate and cannot withstand prolonged exposure to cold, so it migrates south to Mexico by October.

HABITAT: The lesser long-nosed bat is most commonly found below 1,800 feet elevation in arid grasslands, scrubland and oak forests.

BIOLOGY: The lesser long-nosed bat commonly roosts in large colonies of 1,000–100,000 individuals. In April, pregnant females arrive in southwestern Arizona and Sonora, Mexico, joining other females at a handful of large maternity colonies. Females are believed to return to the same maternity roost year after year. Males form separate, smaller colonies. As in most bat species, females give birth to one young per year and feed the pup for four to eight weeks. The young lesser long-nosed bat can fly within several weeks of birth, after its forearm length reaches 46 mm.

This bat's long tongue is tipped with brush-like papillae to lap up nectar from the flowers of saguaros and organ pipe cactus in early summer. It feeds on paniculate agave in southeastern Arizona during August and September. The lesser long-nosed bat also eats pollen, mostly ingested when the bat

STATUS: The lesser long-nosed bat is federally listed as endangered throughout its range in the United States and Mexico. Surveys in the 1970s and early 1980s revealed low numbers of this species at known roosts, leading to its being declared endangered in 1988. Population estimates conducted since listing suggest this species is more abundant than once thought. The relatively few roosts where large numbers of these bats congregate to raise young make the species vulnerable to a variety of threats.

MANAGEMENT NEEDS: Protection of migratory corridors and all maternity roosts for this species is crucial. Protection of food plants within 50 miles of roosts and along migratory paths also is critically important. To estimate population size, biologists in Arizona and Mexico conduct simultaneous surveys at important roosts each June and August. The Arizona Bat Conservation Strategic Plan outlines goals and objectives for managing, monitoring and researching the lesser long-nosed bat and Arizona's other bat species. 🦇

■ Biologist Angela McIntire coordinates the Bat Project for the Arizona Game and Fish Department.