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## **WildLaw files for Federal protection of the Florida bonneted bat**

***Petition requests the Fish & Wildlife Service to list one of the rarest mammal species in North America under the Endangered Species Act***

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St. Petersburg – On behalf of Wild South, WildLaw today filed a petition with the Secretary of Interior and the Director of the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service to formally place the Florida bonneted bat on the federal endangered species list. This filing is the first step in the process of listing a species through the citizen petition process in Section 4 of the Endangered Species Act.

The Florida bonneted bat is endemic to South Florida and is one of the most imperiled mammal species in the United States, with estimates putting the total remaining population at less than 200. The State of Florida lists the bat as endangered, but no formal management or recovery plans currently exist.

The bonneted bat roosts primarily in trees and manmade structures, including bat houses and Spanish-style tiled roofs, and may be present in as few as 12 remaining separate scattered locations from Punta Gorda to Miami. The biggest threats facing the bats' continued existence include habitat loss and alteration (tree removal and urbanization), pesticide use (resulting in reduced insect food sources and possible toxic effects), and the fact that bats are seen as nuisance animals by many. Further, since so few scattered small populations remain, the bats' existence could be threatened by natural disasters such as hurricanes or fire.

With this filing, Wild South and WildLaw hope to gain additional protections for this imperiled species with the goal of ensuring the bonneted bat can call Florida home for many years to come.

The Service has 90 days to determine whether the petition presents substantial information indicating that adding the Florida bonneted bat to the list of endangered species may be warranted. If they decide listing may be warranted, the Service then would begin a full status review of the species and must determine whether the Florida bonneted bat will be listed under the ESA, based "solely on the basis of the best scientific and commercial data available."

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WildLaw is a non-profit environmental law firm whose mission is to defend the environmental integrity of human and natural communities through education, administrative actions and litigation. WildLaw is based in Montgomery, Alabama, with offices in St. Petersburg, Florida, and Asheville, North Carolina. On the web at [www.wildlaw.org](http://www.wildlaw.org).

WildSouth is a non-profit grassroots organization whose mission is to inspire and empower people to protect and restore the native ecosystems of the Southeast! On the web at [www.wildsouth.org](http://www.wildsouth.org).