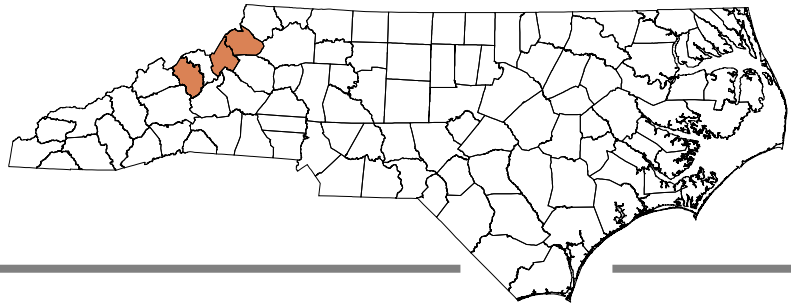


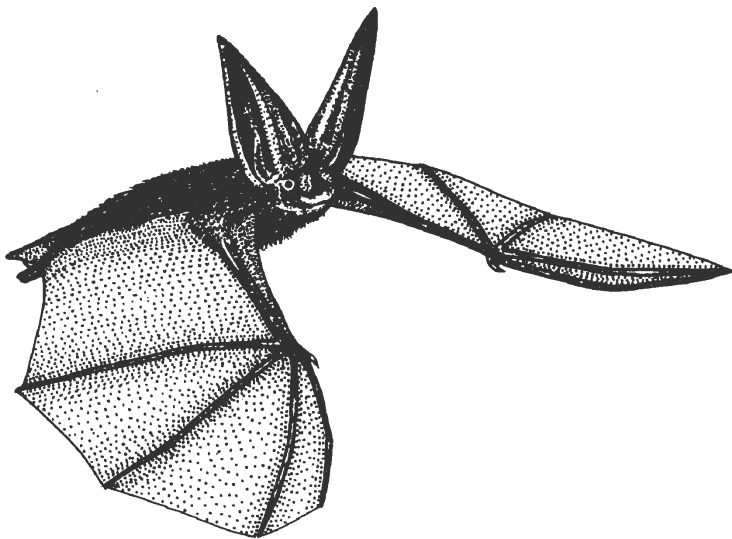
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# Virginia big-eared bat

*Corynorhinus (=Plecotus) townsendii virginianus*  
Endangered (November 30, 1979)



**Description:** Two species of big-eared bats occur in North Carolina. The Virginia big-eared bat is a medium-sized bat with large ears connected by a low band across the forehead and with a globular shaped mass on the muzzle and elongated nostrils. The other species is Rafinesque's big-eared bat (*Corynorhinus [=Plecotus] rafinesquii*), a Federal Species of Concern. The ears of these two species distinguish them easily from all other bats in the state. Over 1 inch (2.5 cm) long, the ears are twice as high as those of other species. When the bats are at rest, the ears are curled alongside the head and reach back to half the length of their body. Although it is unlikely the two species overlap in range, the following characteristics can be used to distinguish between them: (1) The fur of the Virginia big-eared bat is long, soft, and a uniform color from base to tip, while that of Rafinesque's big-eared bat is bi-colored. (2) The toe hairs of Rafinesque's big-eared bat extend past the toes, while the Virginia big-eared bat's do not. (3) The ventral fur of the Virginia big-eared bat is light brown, while that of Rafinesque's big-eared bat is whitish.



**Life History:** In winter, individuals of this species hibernate rather than migrate. They roost alone or in small clusters along ceilings and walls near the mouth of caves where there is air movement. In the spring and summer, females form maternity colonies in warm caves while males are usually solitary. Mating occurs in fall and winter and a single young is born in June. Nocturnal feeders, they wait until well after dark to forage for moths, beetles, flies, wasps, and winged ants.

**Habitat:** Non-migratory, these bats live year round in caves or old mines, although summer and winter roosts may differ. Caves are usually located in mountainous limestone regions over 1500 feet elevation where the dominant trees are oak and hickory, or beech, maple, and hemlock. Most known roost sites have been closed off with gates to prevent disturbance.

**Distribution:** Fragmented into several populations, these bats are found in Avery, Watauga, and Yancey counties in the mountain region.

**Threats:** Habitat disturbance from noise, bright lights, or human presence has caused several winter colonies to disappear.

**Management Recommendations:** Protection of caves and other habitat from interference by cavers, sightseers, and other human activity.

*Sources: Clark 1987a; Terwilliger et al. 1995; USFWS 1992a, 1992b; Webster et al. 1985.*