



Southeastern Bat Diversity Network

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PRESS RELEASE

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Conservationists Pledge \$5,000 Reward for Conviction of Bat Vandals

OLIVE HILL, Ky. - Regional and national conservation groups have combined fundraising efforts to offer a \$5,000 reward for information leading to the apprehension and conviction of individuals responsible for the deaths of more than 100 Indiana bats in Carter Caves State Park.

Authorities believe vandals entered a cave at the park on two occasions between Oct. 21 and Oct. 27, 2007, attacking a hibernating colony of Indiana bats with rocks. In response to the vandalism, groups from around the country have worked with the Kentucky Department of Fish & Wildlife Resources to help raise funds for the reward. Contributors include the Southeastern Bat Diversity Network (www.sbdn.org), Defenders of Wildlife (www.defenders.org), and Bat Conservation International (www.batcon.org). Local environmental consulting firms and cave grottos have also contributed to and solicited funds for the reward.

“The silver lining in all of this is the unified response we’ve received from such a diverse group of contributors,” said Jeff Schwierjohann, a board member of SBDN. “We’ve received everything from \$10 donations from college students to \$1,000 donations from business and non-profit organizations. These organizations and individuals might not work together otherwise and sometimes have opposing viewpoints, but all have recognized that this issue is critical to public and private conservation efforts.”

Carter Caves State Park houses the largest hibernating population of Indiana bats in Kentucky. Indiana bats are federally protected under the Endangered Species Act. Individuals may live up to 30 years and can consume their weight in insects each night. Indiana bats at Carter Caves State Park may migrate as far

as Michigan (about 300 miles) to raise young in their preferred summer habitat, returning every winter to hibernate in the same cave at the park. Indiana bats only give birth to one baby, or pup, per year, so the loss of 100 bats at once is significant. This loss could be detrimental to the recovery of the species and set back conservation efforts throughout the region.

“Federal, state, business, and non-profit agencies spend millions of dollars each year to keep healthy ecosystems intact so both people and wildlife have clean air and water, and healthy forests,” said Nina Fascione, vice president for field conservation at Defenders of Wildlife. “One senseless act like the bat killing in Carter Caves drastically sets back those efforts and takes money out of the pockets of all taxpayers.”

Violations of the Endangered Species Act can result in a maximum penalty of a \$100,000 fine and a year in prison. Anyone with information about the bat deaths should contact Special Agent Bob Snow of the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service at (502) 582-5989.

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