



Illinois Extension  
UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

# Managing Forests for Bats in Illinois

## A Quick Guide for Landowners

### INTRODUCTION AND USE

This guide provides simple steps a landowner can take to manage forests for bats. It is not regulatory and does not supersede federal or state guidance for listed species. Landowners should consult with a professional forester and wildlife biologist to develop forest management plans to support timber production and bat conservation.

### BATS OF ILLINOIS

Thirteen species are found in Illinois and two more are occasional visitors.

Three of Illinois' bats are federally endangered and six are state-listed.

Threats to bats include disease, habitat loss and degradation, winter roost disturbance, wind energy development, and climate change.

### FORESTS ARE VITAL HABITAT

Most bats in Illinois spend their days roosting in trees from late March to late October and overwinter in caves or mines.

Bats can either dwell in the foliage or cavities or crevices of trees.

Solar-exposed trees that provide warm temperatures are preferred for pup development and rearing, which occurs from May to August.

Trees may host tens to hundreds of females in a "maternity colony".

Bats may also roost in shaded trees below the canopy in small groups or singly.

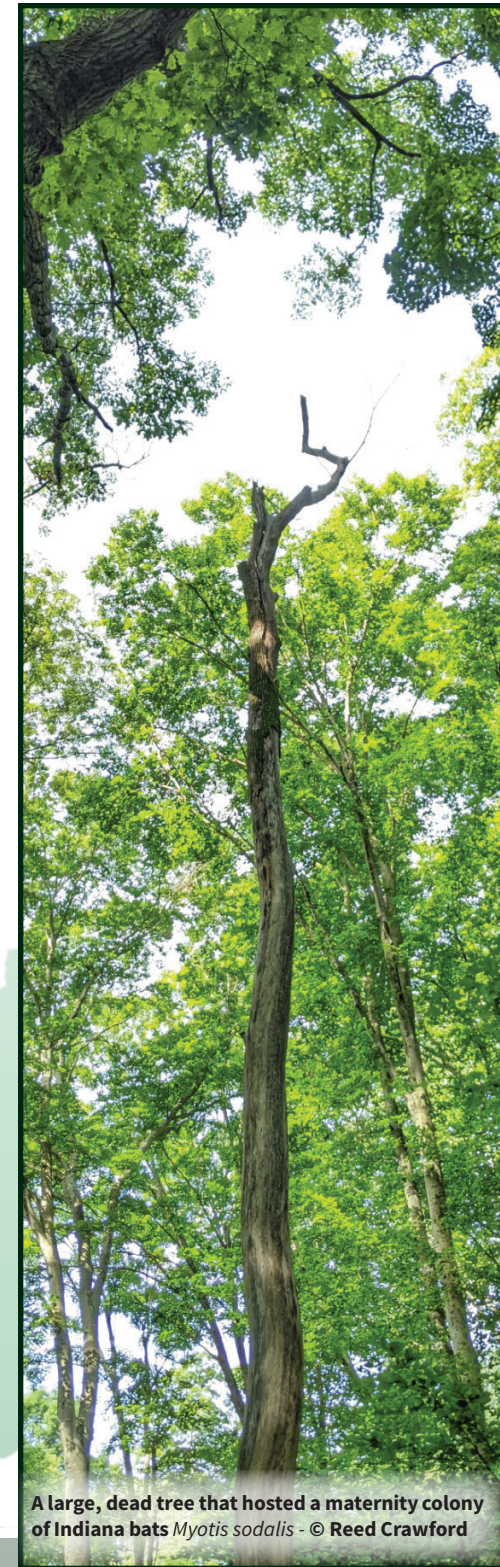
Bats are faithful to their summer roosting areas and return to the same tree(s) or forest patch each year.

Bats provide vital ecosystem services, reducing insect density and protecting young trees from herbivory.

Major prey items include moths, beetles, flies, and true bugs.



Eastern Small-footed Myotis *Myotis leibii* - © Johnny Baakliny

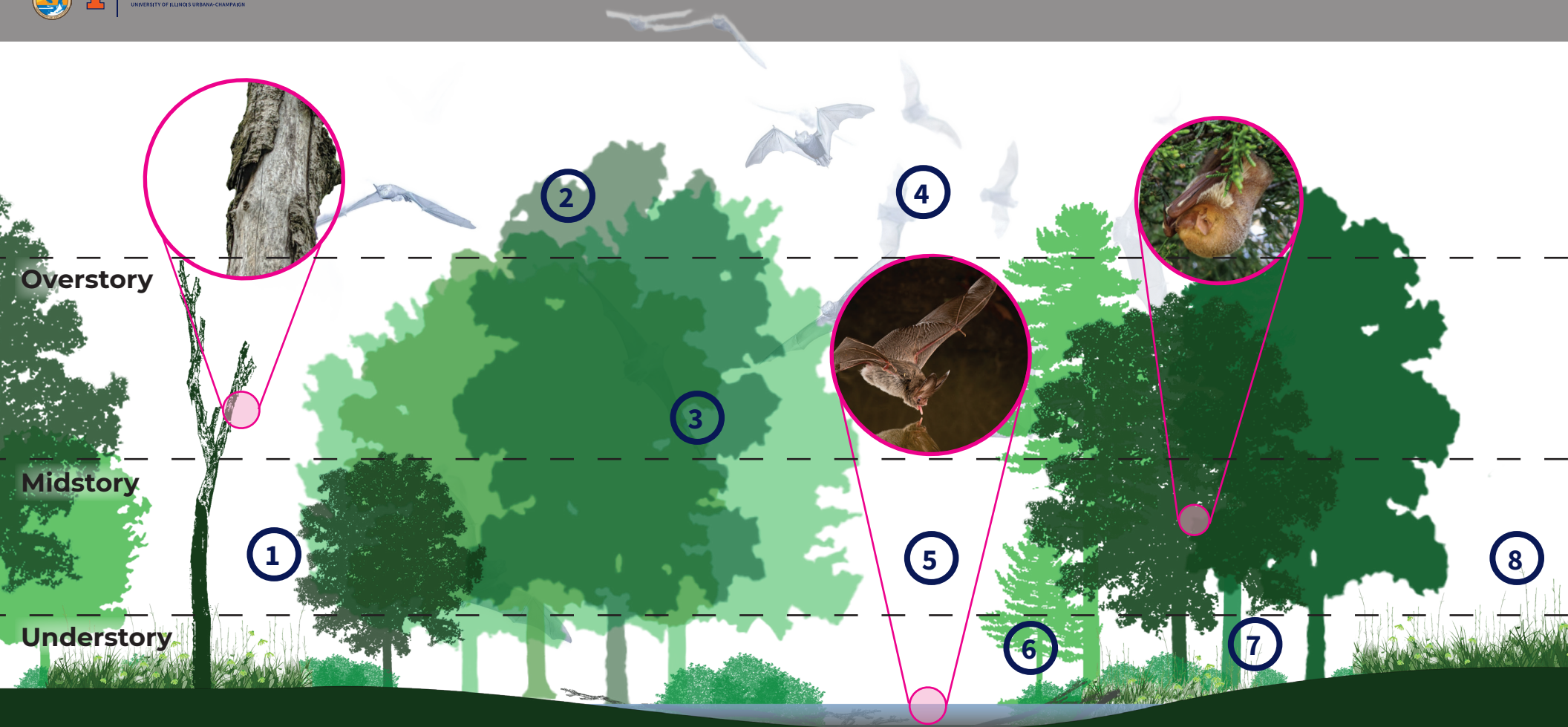


A large, dead tree that hosted a maternity colony of Indiana bats *Myotis sodalis* - © Reed Crawford





## SIMPLE STEPS YOU CAN TAKE TO MANAGE YOUR FOREST FOR BATS



1. Preserve dead and damaged trees to provide roosting habitat

2. Preserve large trees and trees with loose bark; avoid removing trees during the summer

3. Maintain native tree diversity and complex forest structure

4. Provide small canopy gaps and corridors to enhance foraging opportunities

5. Protect and maintain clean water sources (ponds, wetlands, streams)

6. Promote natural regeneration and succession of native trees

7. Maintain an open understory by removing invasive shrubs and trees

8. Add native shrubs and pollinator plants in openings to provide foraging habitat