

7-1-2016

Dave Navecky a Surface Transportation Board,

Docket # FD 35952

Will the EIS please analyze the direct and indirect impacts of GLBT's proposed rail line, on our state-threatened bats?

We can not have any of the bats habitat destroyed by proposed railroad.

The bats helps our agriculture by eating huge amounts of insects. This reduces our farms pesticide costs. Bats have a huge part in ~~of~~ Wisconsin's ecosystem and economy.

Thank you

Jacque Mcnail
8841 E. Cty. A

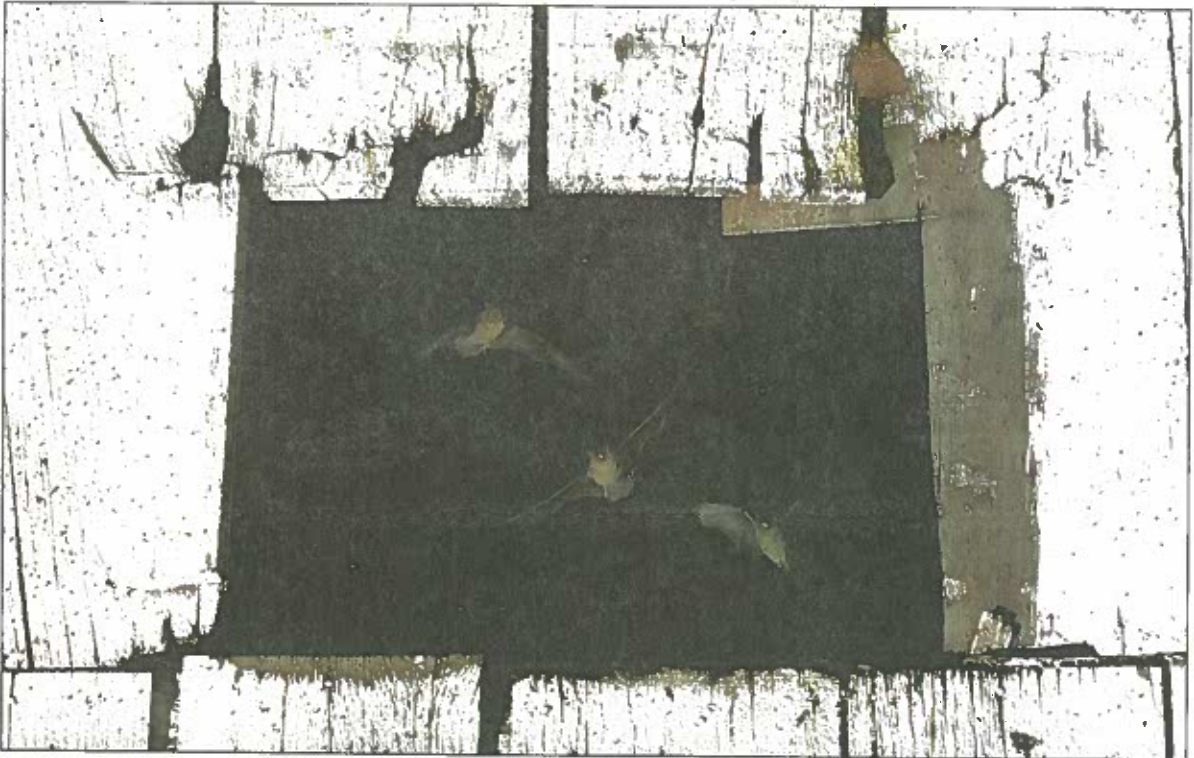
608-921-9164

Janesville WI 53546

mcnails@comcast.net

Fearing the future

Fungal disease threatens prospects for Wisconsin bats



Anthony Wahl/awahl@gazettextra.com

Three brown bats exit a barn owned by Justin Shultz near Milton. Shultz volunteers for the Wisconsin bat program, where he counts the bats in his barn throughout the summer to monitor their numbers.

MILTON

Justin Shultz may be witnessing a vanishing flight of nature.

Nightly at dusk, he watches the first bat slip out of an opening in his family's 90-plus-year-old barn.

Then a few more emerge as if to test the air.

Soon, hundreds explode from their daytime roost and swirl upward like a plume of dark smoke to devour huge numbers of insects.

"It takes about an hour for them all to leave," Shultz said.

Earlier this month, he took part in the state's Great Wisconsin Bat Count and tallied more than 800 with a hand-held count-



ANNA MARIE LUX
BETWEEN THE LINES

er at his home north of Milton.

Most were little brown bats, which are one of four cave-dwelling bats on the state-threatened-species list.

TO HELP

Wisconsin residents may volunteer for two bat-monitoring programs sponsored by the DNR. They are the summer colony roosting and acoustic monitoring programs.

For more information, contact Paul White at 608-267-0813 or Heather Kaarakka at 608-266-2576 or go online to wiatri.net/Inventory/Bats/volunteer/

The count provides critical information from summer-roost locations across Wisconsin as the state grapples with deadly white-nose syndrome.

The disease has killed millions of hibernating bats in eastern and southern states and was discovered in Wisconsin in 2014.

Shultz urges others to take part in the Department of Natural Resources counts.

"You can help researchers understand bats and

Turn to **BATS** on Page 6A



Photos by Anthony Wahl/awahl@gazetteextra.com

Justin Shultz of Milton volunteers for the Wisconsin bat program, counting bats in his barn throughout the summer. His work and the work of other counters help keep tabs on the advance of white-nose syndrome in the state. The disease kills bats, which are critical to the ecosystem.

Bats/Disease's mortality rates could threaten entire ecosystems

Continued from 1A

how the fungus is affecting them," he said. "You can have an impact."

A survey last winter found the fungus has spread to new hibernating sites and is starting to decimate state bat populations.

One site in Door County along the shoreline shows dramatic decline. More than 500 bats were counted last year, compared to only 25 this year.

"It is very likely that this decline is because of white-nose syndrome," said Heather Kaarakka, a conservation biologist with the DNR.

No one knows exactly how white-nose syndrome will impact state bats.

"However, it is very likely that we will see dramatic declines at most monitored summer sites as the disease progresses across Wisconsin," Kaarakka said.

Surveys showed a 94 percent drop in bat populations at the Grant County mine where the disease was first detected two years ago. One site

where the disease was found in 2015 had no bats this year.

The beneficial mammals play an important role in the state's ecosystems and economy because they have incredible appetites.

A 2011 North American study estimated that bats save Wisconsin agriculture between \$658 million to \$1.5 billion annually in pesticide costs because they devour so many insects.

"Bats eat a whole host of agricultural and forestry pests," Kaarakka said. "We don't know what will happen when they are reduced from the landscape."

The DNR's June bat count takes place before the babies, known as pups, begin to fly.

Totals were 9,742 little brown bats and 616 big brown bats.

Another count will take place in July.

Last year, volunteers tallied 7,144 little brown bats and 675 big brown bats at 34 roosts.

This year, the number of roost sites increased to 37.

"...Participation has gone up, which has boosted the numbers since last year, even though some sites counted significantly fewer bats than in previous years," Kaarakka explained.

White-nose syndrome does not affect people or other animals, but it causes hibernating bats to wake, use up their energy and die from starvation, dehydration or exposure to the elements.

Wisconsin has one of the highest concentrations of hibernating bats in the United States.

The fungus that causes white-nose syndrome is difficult to eliminate, said J. Paul White, DNR conservation biologist.

"We do not expect to find a single cure for the disease," he said. "However, using a combination of effective disease treatments and management actions should reduce impacts on bats."

Wisconsin partnered with different groups to test several treatment options, including vaccines, antifungal chemicals and probiotics.

403 surveys completed in 2015, counting 29,751 bats

Great Wisconsin Bat Count

The goal was to count as many roosts as possible in a single weekend.

Little brown bats counted
Big brown bats counted
Big brown bat surveys



A bat colony's summer

After the most colony population steadily grows as bats return to their summer roost from overwintering habitat.

Number of roosts counted in 2015

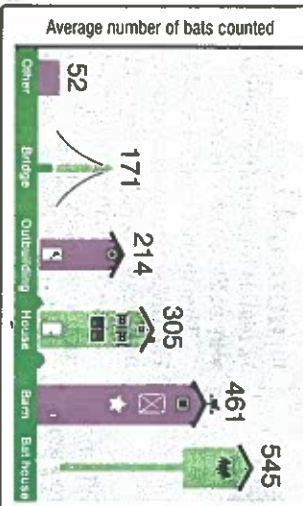
Big Brown Bat 27 Little Brown Bat 60

Roost monitoring report

2015 Wisconsin Bat Program / Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources

Bat houses attract large crowds

Barns and bat houses produced the largest number of little brown bats.



Meet a couple of our bat species

Two of Wisconsin's most common bats are the little brown bat and big brown bat.

Big brown bat

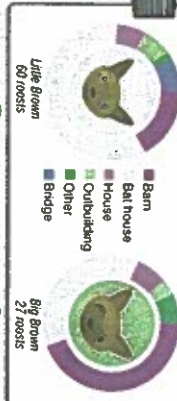
The big brown bat is the largest of our native bats. It usually overwinters in caves and mines, but occasionally hibernates in buildings.

Little brown bat

This common bat species eats insects and is found in large numbers in bat houses and buildings in the summer. In winter, they hibernate in caves and mines.

Where do bats live?

The bats we count live in a variety of man-made structures.



Help survey bats!

Keep a log of bats you see? Want to help count bats?

Contact Heather at heather.kaarakka@wisconsin.gov or visit wahl.naturalheritage/bats



A group of little brown bats roosts in the barn owned by Justin Shultz near Milton on Monday evening. Shultz volunteers for the Wisconsin bat program, counting bats in his barn throughout the summer.

Some treatments show promise, but their effectiveness is still being analyzed.

"Unfortunately, we already have observed bat mortality similar to what was seen in eastern states," White said.

"We expect similar declines to

continue as the disease invades new areas."

Anna Marie Luz is a Sunday columnist for The Gazette. Call her with ideas or comments at 608-755-8264, or email amarluz@gazetteextra.com.

McNalls
8841 E. County A
Janesville, WI 53546



Dave Navecky Office of Environmental Analysis
Surface Transportation Board
395 E. Street SW
Washington, DC 20423-0001

Pocket # FD 35952 20423-0001