

# CONSERVATION FACT SHEET



## Discovering Our Endangered Neighbor, the Florida Bonneted Bat

Little is known about our largest and most endangered bat in Florida. It is believed that only hundreds still exist in their small populations recorded nowhere else in the world but four South Florida counties. To get the protection that this species requires to help avoid extinction and get listed as a federally endangered species, a few questions still need to be answered. We cannot protect what we do not understand and we understand very little about the Florida Bonneted Bat. What does it eat? How many still exist? Where do they like to roost? What kind and how big of a habitat do they need to survive?

A dead Bonneted bat was found on Zoo Miami grounds in 2004 and another's call was recorded at night in 2011. This highly endangered species exists right in our backyard. As an institution dedicated to helping conserve species, biodiversity and habitats, it is natural for us to try and learn about and protect this species. Does this bat exist on Zoo property because its preferred habitat is the pine rockland surrounding zoo grounds? Has its numbers declined because pine rockland habitat has declined to less than 2% of its historical area? Do its preferred food items exist on Zoo property but not other areas? In order for it to get the protection it needs, these type of questions need to be answered in order to know how to properly protect it.

Zoo Miami received funding from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to conduct acoustical surveys of the Zoo and adjacent Miami-Dade County properties to determine what bat species occupy the area and, in particular, does the Florida Bonneted Bat occupy the area. The survey will utilize ultrasonic recording equipment over a set of coordinates throughout the year to try and detect where and how the Bonneted Bat may utilize the property. The hopes are that a roosting site(s) for the Bonneted Bat will be discovered. From this, we may learn what kind of roosting sites it prefers, what it eats (through guano analysis), and possibly learn more about its flight characteristics through thermal imaging. Once we learn more, we will be able to take appropriate measures to help protect this species and pass on the knowledge learned to land managers and policy makers.