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Report, Bats of Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary, Summer 1992

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BATS OF CORKSCREW SWAMP SANCTUARY

Leigh Fiedler

Seasonal Naturalist, Summer 1992

PROPERTY OF:
CORKSCREW SWAMP SANCTUARY
375 SANCTUARY ROAD
NAPLES, FL 34120

Very little is known about bats in Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary. Bats are a very difficult species to study due to the fact that it takes a great amount of time to obtain any significant data. It is also very costly and funds are usually not available. There has been one short study conducted here by Mark Robson, Regional Nongame Biologist for the Florida Game and Freshwater Fish Commission. He was specifically looking for the Florida Mastiff Bat (Eumops glaucinus floridanus), of which he found none. However, through his study, he did record two species found on the sanctuary, the northern yellow bat (Lasiurus intermedius) and the evening bat (Nycticeius humeralis). Since the bats were detected by ultra sound equipment, there was no data collected to determine the abundance of these bats.

L. intermedius is probably the most common of these two species mentioned. It is a tree-roosting species which nests in small groups. During the breeding season, however, the females will form larger colonies. Like most bats in North America, they eat insects. L. intermedius is found in Southeastern United States and ranges primarily from the coast of North Carolina down to Southeastern Texas. Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary is a particularly good habitat for this species because many dead, hollow trees remain standing for long periods of time and many of

the living trees hold dead snags as well. These both can make excellent roosting cavities. This species, during the daytime, is also known for hanging in clumps of spanish moss, which is abundant throughout most of the sanctuary.

The second species, N. humeralis, is a species that tends to roost in old buildings and structures. This is most likely the reason it is less common in the sanctuary. However, in a suitable habitat, they will roost in tree cavities as well. This species is much more colonial and the maternity colonies are much larger than that of L. intermedius. N. humeralis ranges also in the Southeastern U.S. but has a much farther expansion north compared to L. intermedius. It extends up into Iowa across to Pennsylvania excluding the Allegheny Mountains. They are also insectivorous and, where abundant, can often be seen soaring high overhead early in the evenings.

Two other bat species that are commonly found in S. Florida and likely inhabit Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary are the Seminole bat (Lasiurus seminolus) and the Brazilian free-tailed bat (Tadarida braziliensis). L. seminolus is much like L. intermedius in that it mainly roosts in tree cavities and hangs in spanish moss during the day. However, it is unique in that the females have three to four young rather than just one, like most bat species. T. braziliensis typically roosts in buildings and is the smallest of the free-tailed bats.

Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary seems to be a great habitat for all of the above-mentioned bats. It has a variety of habitats lying adjacent to one another with plenty of water as well. Where bat studies have been conducted, this is the type of habitat where

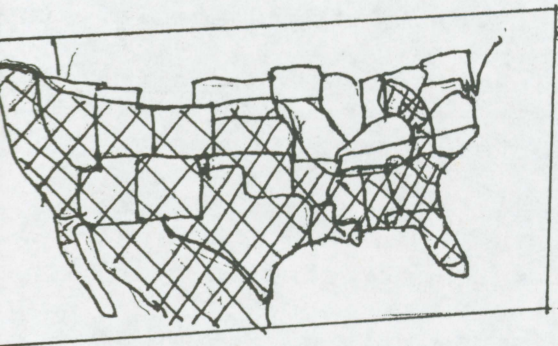
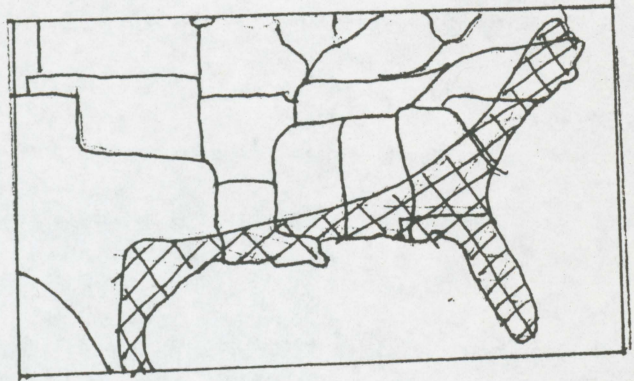
these species thrive. Although bats aren't often observed at Corkscrew, most of the sanctuary's 11,000 acres are never seen by humans, especially at night. So, more than likely, bats do inhabit these areas. However, to get an accurate count, extensive and timely studies would have to be conducted. As for now, populations of these species elsewhere seem to be healthy and therefore there is no need for these types of studies.

A bat house was constructed to be placed in the housing area of Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary. Of the above-mentioned species, the one most likely to inhabit a bat house would be N. humeralis. The house was built to accommodate this species because it prefers to roost in old houses rather than in trees. Since they do tend to be more colonial roosters, the house was constructed to hold approximately 30 bats at a time. The house will be placed in a tree approximately 15-20 feet high. Typically it takes a colony of bats around one year to begin to inhabit a bat house. At that time it can then be easier to get an accurate count of at least that particular colony.

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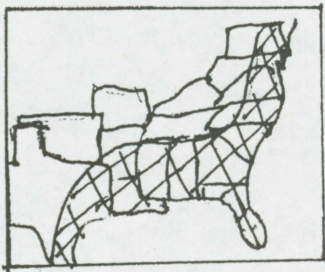
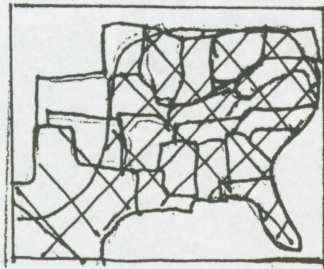
RANGES

NORTHERN YELLOW BAT
(Lasiurus intermedius)



BRAZILIAN FREE-TAILED BAT
(Tadarida brasiliensis)

EVENING BAT
(Nycticeius humeralis)



SEMIWOLE BAT
(Lasiurus seminolus)