



THE SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR
WASHINGTON

NATIONAL BAT WEEK
October 24-31, 2019

By the Secretary of the Interior of the United States of America

A PROCLAMATION

WHEREAS, bats are vital to the sustainability of natural ecosystems, national economies, and human health by controlling damaging insect pests, pollinating plants such as fruits and vegetables, and dispersing seeds to ensure healthy functioning ecosystems; and research suggests that bats save American farmers more than \$3 billion in pest control every year;

WHEREAS, bats have captured the human imagination through backyard sightings, folklore, myths, and legends;

WHEREAS, outreach and education about the importance of bats are instrumental;

WHEREAS, bats are present throughout the world, except in extremely cold regions, and are the second-largest order of mammals with over 1,300 species;

WHEREAS, a deadly fungus causing white-nose syndrome, a disease that has killed millions of bats in North America, has now spread to 38 States;

WHEREAS, the disease has been confirmed in 12 species of hibernating bats in the United States and is the primary cause for the significant decline in populations of several bat species, especially the tri-colored bat, little brown bat, and the federally threatened northern long-eared bat;

WHEREAS, the Department of the Interior's (Department) participation, through the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), U.S. Geological Survey, National Park Service, and Bureau of Land Management, is leading the international response to the disease in partnership with more than 100 Federal and State agencies, Tribes, non-governmental organizations, and universities;

WHEREAS, FWS has entered into an agreement with the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation to establish a "Bats for the Future Fund" to raise private funds to curtail the spread of white-nose syndrome and speed the recovery of bat populations;

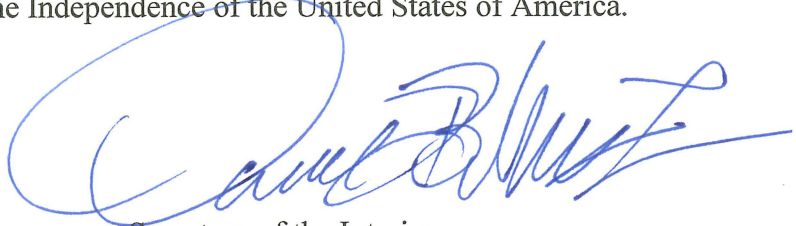
WHEREAS, FWS is funding a White-nose Syndrome Challenge for ideas toward solutions that can help disarm or weaken *Pseudogymnoascus destructans*, the fungus that causes white-nose syndrome disease of hibernating bats; and

WHEREAS, in the past decade, the international response to white-nose syndrome has made extraordinary progress to understand the disease, slow the spread, and develop treatments that hold promise for defeating this epidemic;

NOW, THEREFORE, in recognition of the vital significance of protecting the health of bat populations, I, David L. Bernhardt, Secretary of the United States Department of the Interior, do hereby proclaim October 24 to 31, 2019, as National Bat Week at the Department.

I call upon the American public to join us in recognizing the importance of bats throughout the Nation.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this 24th day of October 2019, the two-hundred forty-fourth year of the Independence of the United States of America.



Secretary of the Interior