



Welcome to Minnesota Tree Farm News, a 'sometimes' publication of your Minnesota State Tree Farm Committee.

**IN THIS ISSUE:**  
The Planting Equation... Page 1

Minnesota and the Long – Eared Bat



Page 2

A Summer Conference... Page 4

*"The Spring came suddenly, bursting upon the world as a child bursts into a room, with a laugh and a shout and hands full of flowers."*

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow



**B**elieve it or not, spring is not too far around the corner. The signs are with us: (eves dripping, incurable urge to lie on the tar with the dog, urine spots of wild canids – like fox and wolves – marking their territories, chickadees changing to their amorous song.

And, likely if you own a little piece of earth, you are thinking about planting.

The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources has a neat slogan on its web site: "Right Tree. Right Place. Right Way."

That **'right tree'** isn't always the one that immediately comes to mind because of its shape or color or because it's the kind of tree you grew up playing under. Keep a few things in mind, even so simply as remembering that conifers keep their needles all year and are good for windbreaks and privacy.

Hardwoods lose their leaves and aren't so good for those things, but in the summer, when planted on the south side of your home, they provide shade in the summer and warmth in the winter. AND, they are the ones that give Minnesota its notoriety for autumn colors.

Next, the **'right place.'** Start by making a sketch of your property that includes both utility lines that are present underground as well as OVERhead. It's not only the roots you need to think about, it's that canopy of leaves and branches that your tree will impact when it is mature. When you think of place, also think about directions. Planting on the east or west side of a house provides cooling shade in the summer, yet still allows sunshine in during the winter months.

And finally, the **'right way.'** Building a deck? Planting a tree? Installing a mailbox? 811 is the number you should call before you begin any digging project. The federally – mandated national "Call Before You Dig" number, 811 was created to help protect you from unintentionally hitting

Continued on page 3

# The Northern Long-Eared Bat: Why All The Fuss?

By Jodie Provost, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources - Private Land Habitat Coordinator

Likely you have heard mention of the northern long-eared bat (*Myotis septentrionalis*) in the news lately. Last October, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service proposed to list it as an endangered species under the federal Endangered Species Act due to a dramatic decline in its population.

Decline or loss of the northern long-eared bat is a concern. All native species have essential niches or jobs they fill in our ecosystems. For example, bats eat up to half their weight in insects each night. The bats feed on moths, flies, leafhoppers, caddis-flies, and beetles throughout the night by using echolocation.

The recent population decline of northern long-eared bats is caused by an outbreak of whitenose syndrome, a fungal disease first observed in New York State in 2006



that has spread rapidly from eastern North America westward. The disease is expected to spread throughout the range of northern long-eared bats which includes much of eastern and north-central United States, and most of Canada. In Minnesota, long-eared bats occur in both summer and winter, and have been found in many caves and mines.

The northern long-eared bat is about three to four inches long with a 9-10 inch wing span. As its name suggests, it is distinguished by its long ears. Winter is typically spent in cracks and crevices of caves and mines, called hibernacula, which have constant temperatures, high humidity and no air currents. Research is showing that female bats show no obvious preference to tree species for roost sites, and most chosen trees are trees in a state of decay. Males and non-reproductive females may also roost in cooler places, like caves and mines.

Northern long-eared bats breed in late summer or early fall and enter winter hibernaculum in late August or September. Females emerge in May, then migrate to summer areas where they roost in small colonies of up to 60 bats, giving birth to a single pup in June and July. Adults can live 19 years or more.

## What Can We Do To Help?

In your woodland, where possible and not a safety hazard, leave large, older trees that are dead or dying and that provide loose bark, crevices and cavities for roosting and that may house maternity colonies. Many other crevice and cavity-dependent creatures will also benefit. Properly built and placed bat houses can provide additional roost sites.

Due to declines caused by white-nose syndrome as well as continued spread of the disease, the northern long-eared bat was listed as a threatened species under the Endangered Species Act on April 2, 2015. At the same time, an interim 4(d) rule was established. This federal rule is administered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) and may regulate tree removal or other activities if they are conducted:

- within 1/4 mile of an entrance to a known hibernaculum



Northern long-eared bat with white nose syndrome. Photo by Steve Taylor, University of Illinois.



## **Hibernacula:**

A cave, mine, or other feature in which northern long-eared bats have been documented to overwinter)

## **Maternity Roost Tree:**

A tree in which a female northern long-eared bat has been documented to roost)

**Left)** Northern long-eared bat. By Al Hicks, New York Dept. of Environmental Conservation.

**Right)** Hibernating bats. Photo by US Fish and Wildlife Service.

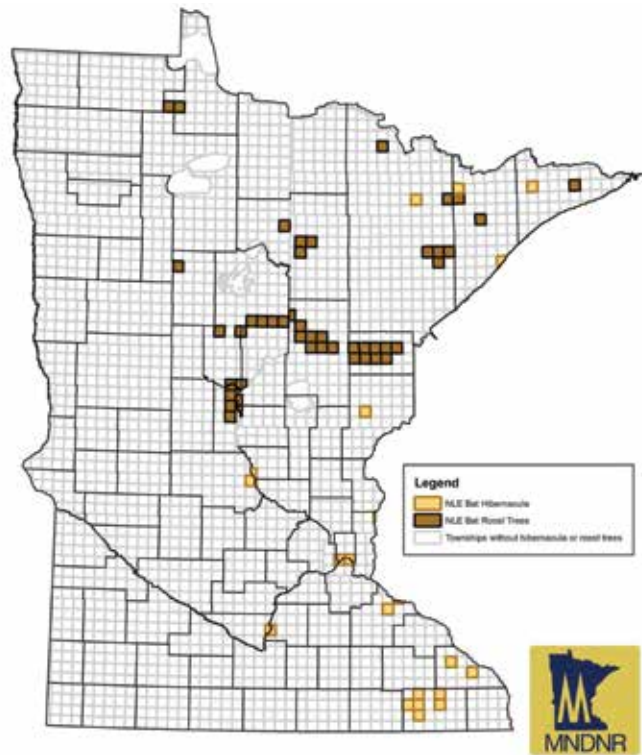
- within 150 feet of a known NLEB maternity roost tree (a tree in which a female has been documented to roost)

While it is unclear how this may affect private landowners, Minnesota is working with the states of Michigan and Wisconsin to develop a Habitat Conservation Plan. An HCP is a formal plan that provides the pathway to permitting for summer forest management activities if a forest dwelling bat becomes listed as Endangered or listed Threatened without a special 4(d) rule, under the federal Endangered Species Act (ESA).

Minnesota Tree Farm will keep landowners apprised of steps taken to ensure the viability of the long-eared bat and the viability of forest management practices. The map on the right shows townships containing long-eared bat maternity roost trees and/or hibernacula entrances.

In inclusion, it is important to note that harvesting timber is a good forest management tool. Practicing good forest management on your woodlands, even in the face of white nose syndrome, is important. ■

## **Townships Containing Northern Long-Eared Bat Maternity Roost Trees and/or Hibernacula Entrances**



## **Planting... Continued from page 1**

underground utility lines. Every digging job requires a call – even small projects like planting trees or shrubs. If you hit an underground utility line while digging, you can harm yourself or those around you, disrupt service to an entire neighborhood and potentially be responsible for fines and repair costs.

As for the planting: Dig a hole twice as wide as the size of the roots and slightly deeper. Place the seedling in the hole, making sure the first main root is slightly below the soil surface, distribute the roots evenly and avoid making a 'J' root. Pack the soil firmly around the roots, making sure there are no air pockets.

Do it right, on that little piece of earth! ■



# Gathering Partners of Natural Resources Conference

Registration is now open for this annual conference, taking place May 20-22 at Saint Mary's University of Minnesota, Winona. **Theme:** Nurturing a Healthy Big Woods/Big River Biome



Gathering Partners is a collaboration between University of Minnesota Extension Forestry and the Minnesota Master Naturalist program. The event will offer educational opportunities and networking to over 300 people from across Minnesota. Open to woodland owners, naturalist volunteers, and anyone interested in the natural environment. More information and registration can be found on the conference Website:

<http://www.minnesotamasternaturalist.org/annualconference/>

**Conference Hosts:** • University of Minnesota Extension Forestry Resources

• University of Minnesota Extension Minnesota Master Naturalist

**Conference Partners:** • Minnesota Department of Natural Resources • Minnesota Forestry Association

## Tree Farmers! We need your help.

Your Minnesota State Tree Farm Committee wants to better serve you. The committee is cleaning up the database of its Minnesota Tree Farmers. You can help by letting us know your correct address (if we are not using it!); your email address, (if you have one); and updates pertaining to Tree Farms that you are familiar with (are their owners deceased? have they 'moved on,' are they needing a contact with a forester?) Please connect with us via snail mail (K. Preece, PO Box 3095, Bemidji, MN 56619; or email: [treefarmstatemn@gmail.com](mailto:treefarmstatemn@gmail.com))

Watch for the upcoming edition of *Tree Farming for BetterFORESTS*. It will include additional information and opportunity to assist in this update. In the meantime, we hope to hear from you.

Minnesota State Tree Farm Committee



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