



White-nose Syndrome of Bats



PHOTO: BAT CONSERVATION INTERNATIONAL

The National Park Service (NPS) preserves, protects, and shares the legacies of treasured resources set aside by the American people as the national park system. In meeting this mission, the Service exercises its mandate for wildlife management in NPS units. White-nose syndrome (WNS) is threatening bat conservation as well as visitor use of some recreational caves and enjoyment of bats in NPS units.

What is at risk from white-nose syndrome?

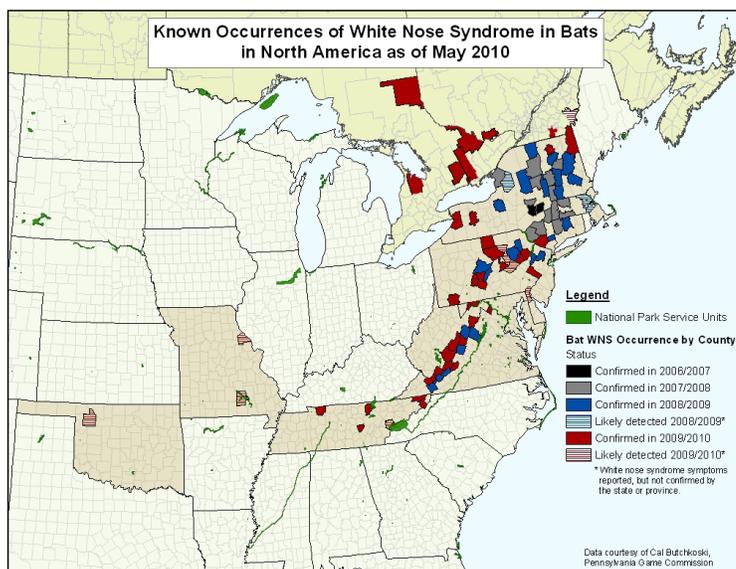
- NPS manages 84 million acres in 392 units. Nearly 1 in 4 NPS units have caves, and 1 in 3 contain mines that can provide habitat for bats and other organisms.
- Nation-wide about 40 species of bats occur in NPS units, including 7 species that are Federally listed as threatened or endangered and numerous other species that are State listed. Bats have important ecosystem functions including roles as insect-eaters, pollinators, and seed dispersers, as well as serving as prey themselves.
- In states where WNS has been detected to date, NPS units are home to numerous

species of insect-eating bats, including 4 species that are endangered. WNS has been found in three NPS units, Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, and Ozark National Scenic River. Numerous other NPS units harbor, or are very near, essential bat hibernacula that are in harm's way.

- NPS units welcome over 270 million visitors per year. Caves are the primary attraction at some national parks such as Mammoth Cave and Carlsbad Caverns, and wild caves are a secondary attraction at numerous NPS units.

How is NPS addressing white-nose syndrome?

- An Acting Deputy Director's memorandum provides guidance to NPS units on management of WNS, including recommendations to close caves and require disinfection or dedication of caving gear. Most interpretive caves with high visitation remain open, and parks are using risk assessments to determine whether or not to continue those activities.
- Reviewing research, maintenance, and education projects that involve cave entry.
- Providing park visitors with educational information on the important ecological role of bats and the need to protect bats from disturbance and human-assisted spread of WNS.
- Supporting WNS research through disease surveillance, sharing existing data, and providing research sites and research assistance at NPS units.
- NPS wildlife veterinarians are providing service-wide coordination on WNS surveillance and management, and partnering with other Federal and State agencies in national coordination efforts.
- The NPS Office of Public Health has issued the following statement on WNS: The human health risk from WNS is unknown but appears to be low. No human illnesses to date have been associated with contact or exposure to WNS-infected bats or caves. Additional research is necessary to further explore potential human health risks associated with WNS.



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