

## White Nose Syndrome May 2008

A white fungus is killing thousands of bats in New York and has been found in Vermont, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Massachusetts and Connecticut. During the winter of 2006-2007 at least 8,000 bats of several species died in New York. This fungus has not yet been found in Missouri or adjacent states.

To date, no one has been able to positively identify the fungus, how it spreads, or how it kills.

The most obvious indication of an infected site is the presence of a white fungus around the nose of some, but not all, infected animals (see photo). There are a number of labs working on the problem, but so far there are no clear answers.



Photo by Al Hicks, New York Department of Environmental Conservation

Based on what we know today, it appears that the problem may be spread at least in part by humans. If so, it would be extremely easy to transfer from site to site. Although the fungus has not been found yet in Missouri, we don't want to inadvertently help its spread. Please do NOT go to caves simply to look for this fungus. That will not be helpful.

Mark Twain National Forest staff skilled in bat identification, along with our partners from the Cave Research Foundation, and the Missouri Department of Conservation will be looking for this fungus as we do our annual cave inventories and surveys.

Some bat hibernation caves on the Mark Twain National Forest are gated and are normally closed during the winter months. These are caves which usually have colonial hibernators (many bats hibernating in tight groups). Other hibernation caves are not gated, and are normally open for recreational caving even during the winter. These are normally caves with single individuals or small groups of hibernating bats. Some caves are gated closed in the summer to protect groups of bats in maternity colonies.

If you plan to visit caves on the Mark Twain National Forest this year, we ask that you check the following link for more information on this problem.

FWS issues an advisory March 26, 2009 at <http://www.fws.gov/northeast/wnscaveadvisory.html>  
<http://www.fws.gov/midwest/Endangered/mammals/BatDisinfectionProtocol.html>

This link contains a clean-up procedure that you should use as a standard operating procedure any time you cave to minimize your impact on caves you visit this year or in the future.

If you are in a cave on Mark Twain National Forest and see a bat (living or dead) with this White Nose Syndrome please contact Kris Swanson, Mark Twain National Forest, 401 Fairgrounds Road, Rolla, MO 65401 (573) 364-4621 as soon as possible. Please note the cave name or location, date and time, and location of the bats within the cave. Do NOT touch the bats and leave the area quickly.

We will post more information on the website as it becomes available.

May 16, 2008 updated April 13, 2009.