



# Protect the Bats



Please help protect bats from White-nose Syndrome (WNS) - a wildlife crisis that has killed more than one million bats in the Northeastern and Mid-Atlantic United States and continues to spread unchecked.

WNS is a newly discovered fungal disease that is not native to North America. Cave-hibernating bats are especially vulnerable because underground caves and mines provide the cool, moist conditions favorable for the fungus to thrive. The Bureau of the Land Management supports about 16 to 18 species of bats in Colorado.

## What is White-Nose Syndrome?

Bats with WNS may exhibit a white fungus that is found around the muzzle, ears, or wings of affected animals. Other symptoms are displayed as well. For example, bats have been found moving to the entrance of the caves and often coming out of the caves and flying around in the middle of the day during winter months. Bats displaying this abnormal behavior have reduced fat reserves.

Although it is normal for bats to occasionally interrupt their winter roosting, they are not equipped to withstand the drain on their fat reserves resulting from flying more often and during the day, a behavior thought to be caused by the irritation of the fungus. Many bats are non-responsive and many have been found dead both inside and outside caves.

## How is White-Nose Syndrome Spread?

- **Bat to Bat** – Bat to bat transmission of *Geomyces destructans* has been documented in lab conditions and the geographic pattern of spread appears to support lab findings. It is also possible that other unknown agents associated with WNS are spread bat to bat.
- **Cave to Humans to Bats** – Aspects of the geographic spread suggest that humans may transmit WNS from infected sites to clean sites. This kind of spread is most likely occurring from clothing and equipment that are not properly cleaned and decontaminated between sites. Formal testing of human-spread WNS is ongoing. Because of the devastating effects of WNS, it is critical that people assume responsibility for the potential spread of WNS.

## Signs of WNS

- White fungus growing on the nose, wings, ears, and/or tail membrane.
- Bats flying outside during the day in winter.
- Bats clustered during winter in sections of caves and mines not normally used for winter roosts, especially near the entrance.
- Dead or dying bats on the ground or on buildings, trees or other structures during the winter.
- Bats not arousing at all after being disturbed.

## Bats Need Your Help

- Report unusual bat behavior to the local BLM office, your state wildlife agency, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service or Forest Service. Unusual behaviors may include daytime flight, especially during very cold weather. Report dead or dying bats found on the ground, trees, or buildings.
- Adhere to all decontamination procedures for caves and abandoned mines on public lands in Colorado.
- Report unauthorized cave and abandoned mine entry to the local BLM office.

## Where can I find out more about WNS and bats?

- U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service:  
<http://www.fws.gov/WhiteNoseSyndrome/>
- Rocky Mountain Region of the U.S. Forest Service:  
<http://www.fs.fed.us/r2/>
- Bat Conservation International:  
<http://www.batcon.org>

