



For three years now, the end of winter has brought tragic reports that White-nose Syndrome has spread into more caves and more states that had previously been untouched by this devastating killer of bats. Sadly, this year is no different. The most recent surveys of bat-hibernation sites confirm that the disease has moved northward into Canada, south into Maryland and has now spread some 400 miles (645 kilometers) westward into and across Tennessee. Eleven U.S. states and the Canadian province of Ontario are now infected, and scientists still are working desperately to find a way to prevent the disease or at least slow its spread.

WNS was discovered in a single New York cave in February 2006. It has raced unimpeded across the Northeast and into the South, turning hibernation caves into mortuaries littered with dead bats. Mortality rates approaching 100 percent are reported at some sites, as well over a million of at least six species have been killed.

In the first report that WNS has reached Canada, the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources said the disease was confirmed at hibernacula in three areas of southern Ontario. The ministry said three other sites are being investigated for WNS.

The Maryland Department of Natural Resources reports that state's first case was confirmed in dead bats at a cave near Cumberland, in northwestern Maryland.

In Tennessee, WNS was reported at a privately owned cave in the state's northeastern corner in February. About a month later, the state Department of Environment and Conservation reported White-nose at Dunbar Cave State Park in north-central Tennessee. The department said the cave was closed over the winter to protect hibernating bats and will not be reopened this year.

WNS has now invaded the ranges of two endangered species, the Indiana (*Myotis sodalis*) and gray myotis (*M. grisescens*), as well as the Virginia big-eared bat (*Corynorhinus townsendii virginianus*), an endangered subspecies.

Bat scientists and conservationists, meanwhile, nervously await the results of still more late-winter cave surveys, while the all-out search for solutions continues. To stay up to date on WNS developments, visit www.batcon.org/wns.

You can help BCI and its partners in our search for the knowledge and tools to stop the devastation of North American bats by White-nose Syndrome. Support the WNS Emergency Response Fund: www.batcon.org/wnsdonate.

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