



Photo: New York Department of Environmental Conservation

The devastation that White-nose Syndrome is wreaking upon bat populations “is unprecedented and scary,” Bat researcher Lance Risley told *The Record* newspaper of Bergen County, N.J.

“This wave has killed more mammals in the United States than anything in recent memory,” said Risley, chairman of the biology department at William Paterson University. “It is entirely possible it could sweep all the way across the country to California, killing millions more bats.”

The newspaper reports that the disease has “killed off about 90 percent of the state’s (hibernating) bat population, according to scientists who recently conducted a count of hibernating bats.”

At Hibernia Mine, New Jersey’s largest bat-hibernation site where up to 30,000 bats normally spend the winter, *The Record* said, “a recent count found only about 1,700 alive – and many of those showed signs of infection,” says Mick Valent, principal zoologist of the state Endangered and Non-game Species Program.

First reported at a New York cave in February 2006, White-nose Syndrome has now spread to 12 states and two Canadian provinces. It was recently confirmed in Quebec and Ontario, Canada, and in Tennessee. The fungus linked to WNS was found in Missouri. More than a million bats have been killed by WNS.

*The Record* said experts warn that continued loss of bats could have expensive ramifications for humans, “since bats consume huge quantities of bugs, including insects that damage crops or carry West Nile and other potentially fatal diseases.”

Congress approved \$1.9 million last October for research to identify the cause and seek solutions for White-nose Syndrome. *Record* reporter James O’Neill writes that many scientists are exploring possible solutions, such as testing fungicides in hopes of finding one that might help bats recover without destroying other cave organisms.

New Jersey scientists, O’Neill said, are considering a novel experiment. They may try capturing several dozen infected bats, nursing them back to health, and then reintroducing them to a contaminated hibernation site “to see if they have developed immunity to the mysterious disease.”

Valent said the recent bat count confirmed his fears about White-nose Syndrome. “If this keeps going,” he told *The Record*, “our bat populations will disappear.”

Bat Conservation International is working on the ground and through partnerships and research support to find solutions for White-nose Syndrome before the damage become irreversible. Help fight WNS by supporting BCI’s WNS Emergency Response Fund: [www.batcon.org/wnsdonate](http://www.batcon.org/wnsdonate).

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