



Little brown myotis, one of the most common bats in North America, could become virtually extinct in the northeastern United States within two decades because of White-nose Syndrome, according to research by Boston University scientists.

The study by biologists Winifred Frick, Thomas Kunz and D. Scott Reynolds was published in the journal *Science*. Based on previous population trends and extensive computer modeling, the team forecasts that regional populations of little brown myotis will collapse to less than 1 percent of their current numbers in 20 years – even if the WNS mortality rate slows. The long-term survival of remnant populations in these areas would be difficult, since females of most bat species produce a single offspring per year.

“If one of America’s most common bat species can be dealt a deathblow, at least regionally in such a short time, what will happen to less secure species around the continent?” said Nina Fascione, Executive Director of Bat Conservation International. “This could cause great ecological, economic and cultural disruptions and damage.”

“The results of this study are depressing, but not unexpected,” said Mylea Bayless, Bat Conservation International’s WNS Response Coordinator who has been on the front lines of the battle against this devastating disease. “For more than three years now, we have witnessed cave floors covered with dead bats. This study validates our long-felt fears. White-nose Syndrome is a tragedy of incredible proportions.”

The little brown myotis is one of the bats most frequently encountered by humans. Its range includes almost every state and province in the United States and Canada. It has generally adapted to human encroachment and often roosts in old buildings, attics and other manmade structures. Little brown myotis and other species affected by WNS are insect-eating bats with enormous appetites for a wide range of pests that damage crops and forests and can cause human disease.

Before the discovery of White-nose Syndrome, Fascione said, no one would have predicted such a dire threat to little browns. The IUCN, the international organization that assesses the health of all species around the world, lists the little brown myotis as a “species of least concern” based on a 2008 assessment.

“This disturbing report very clearly demonstrates the urgent need for substantial funding to combat White-nose Syndrome,” Fascione said. Fascione, with the formal support of nearly 60 other conservation organizations from across the country, urged Congress last May to provide \$5 million for the fight against WNS. Lawmakers will be considering funding for White-nose Syndrome research and monitoring as they go through 2011 budget appropriations.

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