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Bats in the News - Pennsylvania Considers Bats for Endangered List

The Pennsylvania Game Commission is seeking public comment on a proposal to add three bat species that have been almost destroyed by White-nose Syndrome to the state's list of Endangered Species, The Altoona Mirror of Pennsylvania reports.



A little brown myotis with WNS.
Photo by Al Hicks, New York
Department of Environmental
Conservation

The commission noted that pre- and post-WNS surveys of hibernation sites around the state found that populations of the three species had declined by 98 to 99 percent since December 2008, when the fungal disease was confirmed in Pennsylvania, the newspaper said. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service estimates that more than 5.7 million bats have been killed by WNS nationwide.

The species being considered for special protection are the northern myotis (*Myotis septentrionalis*), the tri-colored bat (*Perimyotis subflavus*) and the little brown myotis (*Myotis lucifugus*), one of the most common bats in North America before WNS arrived in 2006.

Reporter Kay Stephens quoted Game Commission Executive Director Carl G. Roe as saying that Endangered Species consideration is warranted because the three bat species "clearly are in imminent danger."

WNS has been confirmed in 23 counties of the state's 67 counties and is suspected in seven others, the commission said, adding that "these counties include all the known major bat hibernacula" in the state.

Before a species can be added to the state's endangered list, the commission must first hold a public hearing, then schedule action, spokesman Jerry Feaser told the Mirror. The commission's next meeting is scheduled for September 24-25, and the agenda has not been prepared, the newspaper said.

Stephens wrote that the commission has provided no details on what actions might be considered to protect and rebuild the bat populations. "Possible measures would include seasonable restrictions on timber cutting in areas with bat maternity sites, restrictions on human entry in areas where bats are hibernating and restrictions on wind turbine operations, also identified as a contributing factor in bat mortalities," she reported.

Bat Conservation International is preparing a comment for submission. The Game Commission says it will accept written public comments pertaining to the proposal through September 11.

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