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Cause Confirmed for Devastating Bat Disease

October 26, 2011 (Austin, TX) – The U.S. Geological Survey’s National Wildlife Health Center and its partners confirmed today that the fungus *Geomyces destructans* is the cause of White-nose Syndrome (WNS), the deadly disease that is devastating bat populations across North America.

Although the affliction was named for the telltale white fungus that grows on the faces (and sometimes wings, ears and tails) of many infected bats, the definitive cause of WNS had remained uncertain. The new, cold-loving fungus was identified and named in 2009, but it remained unclear whether it was the cause of the disease or a symptom of it. Today’s report in the journal *Nature* resolves that question.

“With every new disease, determining its cause is a major milestone, so we are very pleased at this news,” said Nina Fascione, Executive Director of Bat Conservation International, “Bat biologists have suspected for some time that the fungus was causing White-nose Syndrome, and today’s confirmation gives scientists a powerful tool in their efforts to solve this deadly wildlife emergency.”

White-nose Syndrome has killed well over a million bats of six species in five years. Mortality rates approaching 100 percent are reported at some sites. Scientists estimate that one million bats would have consumed nearly 700 tons of insects per year. Since many of the insects eaten by bats are agricultural pests, losing large numbers of bats will have expensive impacts on agriculture.

“This is a critical accomplishment, but it is only one step toward resolving the crisis,” said Fascione. “There is still a long road ahead. and the research that is needed is time-consuming and costly. We urge everyone to ask their Congressional representatives to provide federal funding to help fight this terrible disease.”

For additional information about the US Geological Survey’s findings, click [here](#).

Bat Conservation International (BCI) is devoted to conserving the world’s bats and their ecosystems to ensure a healthy planet. Founded in 1982, the organization has achieved unprecedented progress by emphasizing sustainable uses of natural resources that benefit both bats and people.