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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Bat Biologists' Worst Fears Validated By New Study *Bat Conservation International Reacts to Extinction Predictions*

August 5, 2010 (Austin, TX) – New research forecasts regional extinctions within two decades for one of our most common bat species, the little brown myotis, because of White-nose Syndrome. This raises the frightening specter that millions of bats of many species could soon disappear from North America.

“These looming extinctions could cause great ecological, economic and cultural disruptions and damage,” said Nina Fascione, Executive Director of Bat Conservation International. “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?”

“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,” Bayless said.

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.

The study, conducted by Boston University Postdoctoral Researcher, Winifred Frick and colleagues, is being published in the journal *Science* on Friday (Aug. 6). Based on previous population trends and extensive computer modeling, Frick predicts regional populations of little brown myotis in the Northeast will collapse to less than 1 percent of their current numbers within two decades—even if the mortality rate from White-nose Syndrome slows. The long-term survival of small, remnant populations in these areas is problematic at best. The females of most bat species produce a single offspring per year, which means ravaged populations will recover very slowly.

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 assess the health of all species around the world, lists the little brown myotis as a “species of least concern” based on a 2008 assessment.

The little brown myotis is one of the bats most frequently encountered by people, and its range includes almost every state and province in the United States and Canada. It has learned to adapt well to human encroachment of its habitat and often roosts in old buildings, attics and other manmade structures.

Last May, Fascione, with the formal support of nearly 60 other conservation organizations and a dozen scientists from across the country, urged Congress to provide \$5 million for the fight against White-nose Syndrome. Lawmakers will be considering funding for White-nose Syndrome research and monitoring as they go through 2011 budget appropriations.

“This disturbing report very clearly demonstrates the urgent need for substantial federal funding to combat White-nose Syndrome,” Fascione said.