

Southern Appalachian Creature Feature Podcasts

Snake Fungal Disease

Greetings and welcome to the Southern Appalachian Creature Feature.

Many people have heard about white-nose syndrome, the fungal disease responsible for killing more than a million bats in the eastern United States that has left biologists, researchers, and land managers scrambling to halt its spread and reverse the damage done – an effort still very much under way, and far, far from completion.

While perhaps the most well-known wildlife disease, it certainly isn't the only disease issue facing our animals. The simply-named snake fungal disease is emerging in eastern and mid-western states, including western North Carolina.

Signs of snake fungal disease included scabs or crusty scales, nodules below the skin, abnormal molting, white opaque cloudiness of the eyes not associated with molting, and localized thickening or crusting of the skin.

The disease has been known to kill snakes, though, population-level impacts of the disease aren't yet known. In areas where rare snake species occur in small, isolated populations, the added threat of SFD may threaten the long-term existence of these populations. Wild snakes are valuable because they consume pests that damage crops, prey on rodents that carry disease, and serve as food for many predatory animals.

As its name implies, snake fungal disease is only known to afflict snakes.

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