

## Southern Appalachian Creature Feature Podcasts

### Southern Appalachians face white nose syndrome

Greetings and welcome to the Southern Appalachian Creature Feature.

White nose syndrome, an affliction of unknown origin that is fatal to bats, has been confirmed in two Virginia counties, the first cases in the Southern Appalachians. First documented in New York in 2006, WNS has killed tens of thousands of bats as it spread north and south.

The affliction takes its name from the white-tufts of fungus that often grow on the muzzles of infected bats, however, it's unknown if this fungus is the cause of the problem or merely taking advantage of a diseased and weakened bat.

The Virginia cases highlight a trend as the problem has moved south – the outbreaks are separated by large distances, leading biologists to suspect the affliction is being spread by humans who are travelling and visiting multiple caves. In response to the rapid and disjunct spread of white nose syndrome, the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service recently issued an advisory recommending the closure of all non-commercial caves in states affected by WNS and adjoining states, meaning North Carolina, Tennessee, Kentucky, Ohio, and everything to the northeast. Great Smoky Mountains National Park has closed their caves and the USDA Forest Service's southeast region is expected to close caves soon.

It's important to note that since the Fish & Wildlife Service's advisory is meant to address possible transmission by serious cavers who frequently visit different caves, it doesn't apply to commercial caves which are visited people who may not visit another caves for years. Information about white nose syndrome and the Fish & Wildlife Service's advisory can be found at [www.fws.gov/northeast/white\\_nose](http://www.fws.gov/northeast/white_nose)

For WNCW and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, this is Gary Peeples.