

Southern Appalachian Creature Feature Podcasts

White nose syndrome in North Carolina

Greetings and welcome to the Southern Appalachian Creature Feature.

The team of biologists preparing to enter a Haywood, North Carolina mine suited up in two white Tyvek suits each and taped on rubber boots, and rubber gloves - this all part of an effort to help ensure the biologists aren't a vector for the dreaded bat disease, white-nose syndrome.

While the precautions are aimed at protecting uninfected caves and mines, unfortunately the disease was recently confirmed in North Carolina. White-nose syndrome has killed hundreds of thousands of bats in the Eastern United States, was discovered in a retired Avery County mine and in a cave at Grandfather Mountain State Park, marking the arrival of the disease in North Carolina.

On February first, a team of North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission biologists were conducting a bat inventory of the closed mine where they saw numerous bats displaying symptomatic white patches of fungus on their skin. Five bats from the mine were sent for testing, which confirmed the presence of white-nose syndrome.

In late January, a team of state, federal, and private biologists were conducting a bat inventory of a cave at Grandfather Mountain when they discovered a single dead bat. Following state protocols, the bat was sent for testing and it has been confirmed for white-nose syndrome.

The discovery of white-nose syndrome comes as Commission biologists work through bat inventory and white-nose surveillance efforts at numerous caves and mines in western North Carolina this winter.

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