

Southern Appalachian Creature Feature Podcasts

White-nose syndrome spreads in North Carolina

Greetings and welcome to the Southern Appalachian creature feature.

White-nose syndrome, the disease responsible for killing millions of North American bats continues to spread in Western North Carolina. Earlier this spring the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission confirmed the disease in Haywood County, the fifth North Carolina county where the disease has been discovered.

The Haywood confirmation comes from dead bats collected from an abandoned mine. The disease was previously discovered in a retired Avery County mine, a cave at Grandfather Mountain, a McDowell County cave, an abandoned mine in Yancey County, and near the Pisgah Center for Wildlife Education in Transylvania County. The fungus that causes white-nose syndrome has been detected on nine species of bats so far in North America, all of which are found in North Carolina.

White-nose syndrome has not been detected in any of the so-called tree-roosting bats, which typically roost individually in or on trees in the warmer months and either migrate south for the winter or hibernate individually outside of caves. The fungus also has not been detected in the two species of big-eared bats that occur in North Carolina, both of which hibernate in caves, and one of which is endangered.

While there are no known direct human health effects of the fungus that causes white-nose syndrome, the impact upon humans, other wildlife, and agriculture as a result of declines in bat populations could be significant. Bats play an important role as night-flying insect predators.

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