

Southern Appalachian Creature Feature Podcasts

White nose syndrome in Tennessee

Greetings and welcome to the Southern Appalachian Creature Feature.

Recently the president of a local caving club sat in my office, dressed in rugged Carharts, seeming like he was on his way to a cave. He was lamenting a picture he had brought to share. Taken in an East Tennessee cave, it showed a bat with a white tuft on its nose, an indicator of white nose syndrome.

Within a week, wildlife biologists had collected a bat from the cave, sent it to a lab and test resulted confirmed the presence of white nose syndrome, making it the first record of the affliction in Tennessee, and extending its range southward.

I've often spoken about white nose syndrome, the mysterious ailment that is highly contagious and nearly always fatal to bats. It was first discovered in New York in 2006 and has spread north and south since then.

The arrival of white nose into Tennessee puts it deeper in the Southern Appalachians, and closer to some of the most important bat caves in the nation, including some that are home to thousands of endangered bats. It's feared that humans can carry the ailment from cave to cave, so one of the most straightforward things you can do to help prevent further spread is simply to follow the example of many of the most dedicated cavers in the nation and stay out of mines and wild caves – those not developed for public use.

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