

***To anyone wishing to assist with White-Nose Syndrome monitoring:**

This winter, the VA Natural Heritage Program and the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries are looking to the caving community to help monitor the distribution of White-Nose Syndrome (WNS) in Virginia by conducting entrance surveys at caves to look for unusual bat behavior. Bats affected by WNS often fly out of the caves during the day and dead bats can sometimes be found on the ground, or on rock faces, buildings, etc. near the cave entrance. This behavior is most evident later in the winter, so we suggest surveys be done between 13 Feb and 1 Apr. If you would be willing to conduct surveys, please complete and submit the attached data sheet for each survey.

We are asking people not to go into the caves, but to observe the cave entrance from the outside for at least 30 minutes. Stay far enough back from the entrance that your presence will not discourage bats from exiting the cave. When possible, it would also be best to select caves known to have a good number of bats in the winter. If you can see into the cave a ways without going into the cave, check the entrance area before you leave the site and note the number of bats near the entrance and whether or not the bats appear to be active, show any signs of WNS, etc.

Please look for dead and dying bats on the ground near the cave entrance. Photographs of the bats would be good for documenting the situation, but, at this time, we are not asking for any of these bats to be collected. **Please do not touch or handle any dead or dying bats.**

Please complete the table at the bottom of the data sheet indicating the time spent (including travel time to get to the caves) and miles driven to conduct these surveys. Our state agencies will be able to use the time and miles to help match federal White-Nose Syndrome grants. Volunteer time can be used as part of the match.

Because these surveys will not detect all affected caves, you should assume that all caves, and the soil outside the cave entrance, are potentially affected by WNS and clean and disinfect your footwear before wearing them to another cave entrance. One option we plan to explore is the use disposable footwear covers to keep boots from getting contaminated. The most recent decontamination protocols can be found at:

<http://www.fws.gov/northeast/wnsresearchmonitoring.html>

To maximize the number of sites visited, people are encouraged to coordinate within your grotto and between grottos if possible. However, there is no harm in visiting a site more than once during the season if two groups chose to monitor the same cave. It is probably more important to get out there and survey than to spend too much time coordinating and not getting surveys done.

If you suspect a site is affected by WNS, please report this information ASAP to Rick.Reynolds@dgif.virginia.gov rather than waiting until all surveys have been completed to turn in your forms. Please return forms for all the surveys that you complete to Rick at the address provided no later than March 31.

Note that it is not unusual to see an occasional bat flying on a warm day in the winter; these are usually red bats or big brown bats, so not every bat flying in winter is an indication of WNS. Many of these bats probably roost in buildings or other sites where temperatures are less stable than in caves. However, if you see a number of bats flying and feel something is “just not right,” please report those sightings.

Thank you in advance to all who plan to help in the 2010 survey.

Sincerely,

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* - modified for use in Virginia from document developed by Craig Stihler (WV-DNR) and Barb Douglass (US-FWS,Elkins)

CAVE ENTRANCE SURVEY 2010

Cave Name: _____ County: _____

Date: _____ Temperature: _____ Sky Conditions: _____

Cave Location (coordinates and datum if available) _____

Observation period: Start Time: _____ End Time: _____

Number of bats exiting the cave: _____

Number of bats re-entering cave: _____

Estimated number of bats leaving per hour: _____

Number of dead bat observed outside cave: _____

Notes on species of bats: _____

Printed Name	Signature	Hours	Miles Driven

Grotto affiliation (if any): _____

Return to: Rick Reynolds, VDGIF, PO Box 996, Verona, VA 24482

Rick.Reynolds@dgif.virginia.gov

540-248-9386

Feel free to write additional comments on the back of this form