

Southern Appalachian Creature Feature Podcasts

Kentucky White Nose Syndrome

Greetings and welcome to the Southern Appalachian Creature Feature

In addition to horses and bourbon, Kentucky is known for its caves, and indeed, is home to Mammoth Cave National Park, with the world's longest known cave system. Hand in hand with the incredible number of caves is the fact that Kentucky is an incredibly important state for our nation's bat populations.

That's why the recent news that the bat disease white-nose syndrome was discovered in the state is especially painful. White-nose syndrome was found on a little brown bat from Trigg County, in Southwest Kentucky. Almost 100 bat hibernation sites were checked throughout Kentucky during the winter. The Trigg County cave was one of five revisited by scientists upon confirmation of white-nose in Ohio. These sites were rechecked due to their known proximity to infected sites in adjacent states. The privately-owned Trigg County cave is used for hibernation by six species, including the endangered Indiana bat, and is a summer roost for the endangered gray bat.

White-nose syndrome was first detected in New York state in 2006 and has killed more than one million cave-dwelling bats in eastern North America. Mortality rates of bats have reached almost 100% in multi-year infected caves. With confirmation of white-nose in Kentucky, a total of 16 states, mostly in the eastern U.S., and three Canadian Provinces have now been confirmed infected.

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