An Uncle George Bat House Travels to British Columbia

by Meg Lunnum

In November 2013, Bats Northwest was contacted by a gentleman in Langley, British Columbia requesting a bat house. Kirk “Myotis” had done his homework and was asking about an “Uncle George”. He had read that the “Uncle George” has good results for the Pacific Northwest. The “Uncle George” bat house was designed by Greg Falxa (Cascadia Research), “Uncle George” Carlson and Sanders Freed (Nature Conservancy). They have reported that bats move into the Uncle George fairly soon after installation.

At the time, we were waiting for our bat house builder, Tom, to finish up the Uncle Georges he was making. In December, the bat houses were ready. Bats Northwest contacted Kirk to make arrangements for a meeting. Saturday, December 14, was the chosen day. Kirk and his wife drove down from B.C. and we met along I-5. Unfortunately, by coming early in December, Kirk’s wife wouldn’t be surprised when she received a bat house as her Christmas gift.

Three months later, in March, the “Uncle George” was installed in Kirk’s backyard. The bat house is 18 feet high, south facing and 5 feet from a tree line. Kirk used directions from Bat Conservation International to install the house.

In an email, Kirk said “All last summer bats flew through our back yard on their way to feeding grounds, so our wings are crossed for good luck that they will decide to stay in our house.

Three neighbors were very interested and pleased, all acknowledging the importance of bats...a fourth is not at all happy. Little does she know of how close it was to being put up in the front yard!

Part 2: We are starting our night garden this week, hope it will also be a success (an idea we got from your web site)

Kirk “Myotis” also added: KEEP CALM AND BAT ON!

Bats Northwest web site is waiting for you at: www.batsnorthwest.org

Join our monthly BNW Meetings!
Second Tuesday, 6:30-8:30
Sand Point-Magnuson Park
Building 30 Conference Room
Deadly Bat Disease Detected In Single Wisconsin Site; State Joins 23 Others In Confirming White-Nose Syndrome

News Release Published: April 10, 2014 by the Central Office
Contact(s): Erin Crain, 608-267-7479; Paul White, 608-267-0813 Owen Boyle, 608-266-5244

MADISON - White-nose syndrome, a bat disease that has spread to 23 states and killed up to 5 million bats since 2006, has been confirmed in Wisconsin, state natural resources officials announced today.

One of the bats from the Grant County mine that was confirmed to have white-nose syndrome.

Results from visual inspection and genetic and tissue tests completed earlier this month showed that 2 percent of bats in a single mine in southwestern Wisconsin had the disease, named for the characteristic white fuzz on their nose, wings and tails, according to Erin Crain, who leads the Department of Natural Resources Natural Heritage Conservation Program.

“The discovery is not a surprise but it’s a sad day for Wisconsin. We face the loss of multiple bat species and the benefits they provide to our ecosystems and our people,” Crain says.

“We knew this day would come because white-nose syndrome spreads rapidly bat to bat and bat to cave. With great cooperation from mine and cave owners, we took aggressive steps to prevent human spread of the disease to Wisconsin, and we think those steps helped to delay its arrival by several years, allowing more time for research and to learn from other states’ experiences. But we knew there would be no dodging the bullet. We now face the sad potential of bat die-offs that will be felt at home and across the country.”

Wisconsin is home to several of the upper Midwest’s largest hibernation sites and historical estimates have put the population at 350,000 to 500,000 bats. Bats play an important role by eating insects that can damage forests and transfer diseases like West Nile Virus.

At this time, the discovery in the Grant County mine appears to be an isolated occurrence. DNR’s visual surveys of 85 other mine and cave sites this winter did not find any other signs of white-nose syndrome. However, DNR is awaiting results from genetic tests underway from samples collected at 19 of those other sites as part of the routine sampling.

Grant County mine

County mine. The mine is within flying distance for bats from a site in Illinois where white-nose syndrome had been confirmed in 2012. Bat crews collected two of the bats for genetic and other laboratory testing; the results came back early April and were positive.

The same mine had been examined as recently as December 2013 as part of a study and had no visual signs of white-nose syndrome at that time, Crain says. All four species of bats that hibernate in Wisconsin cave and mines have been documented in this particular mine during surveys of different years.

Next steps in efforts to save bats

Cave and mine owners have been notified of the positive site in Grant County.

DNR will be meeting with its external white-nose syndrome science and stakeholder teams to discuss the finding and how best to proceed based on data collected this winter. The teams are advisory and will forward management recommendations to DNR for consideration.

Most state caves that serve as bat hibernacula have already been seasonally closed to the public for several years as part of the measures DNR has taken to gibe hibernating bats the best possible chance. Several have been closed to all access to delay introduction of the disease to Wisconsin and to slow its spread. Volunteer prevention plan agreements are in place with private and public owners of caves and mines open to human access, including all commercial caves and mines. Recreational cavers also have followed decontamination procedures that prevent transmission of disease between sites.

How citizens can help, including reporting sick or dead bats

Wisconsin citizens can help bats by continuing to avoid disturbing bats, especially during hibernation; by following all decontamination requirements for those who enter caves or mines, and by continuing to volunteer to monitor bat populations in Wisconsin through a variety of opportunities. Wisconsin’s four bat cave species are listed as threatened, a status which makes it illegal to kill them or take action that would result in their death. Learn more about bats and volunteering opportunities on DNR’s Bat Program website, found at http://wi.dnr/wi/trffic/bats.

People who see sick or dead bats are encouraged to report them to DNR; DNR’s Bat Program website, has a link to the reporting form and instructions for how to collect carcasses of dead bats. People should not handle sick bats without appropriate protective clothing.

“Now more than ever we need Wisconsin’s help to keep our bats as healthy as they can heading into next year’s hibernation period and the challenges they will face,” Crain says.

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Where the Public Recognizes the Vital Place of Bats in Our Environment and Economy

Where All Are Inspired by the Remarkable Attributes and Invaluable Contribution of Bats to Our Natural Heritage

Bats Northwest

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Chris Anderson
John Basset
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Sarah Schmidt

Newsletter Editor
Michelle Noe

Web Master
Michelle Noe

These public programs will be held near the Bathhouse Theater on the northwest side of Green Lake in Stock. We will meet on the grassy knoll with picnic tables located across the street from the Theater at the Start Times listed above. Since the program will begin before sunset and continue after dark, you should dress appropriately for the weather conditions on the evening of the event. We look forward to seeing all of you at these events and the opportunity to entertain you and educate you about bats.
Bat Boxes at Wolf Haven

by Meg Lunnum
Since 1982, Wolf Haven International has rescued more than 170 captive-born wolves from private owners, roadside zoos, animal collectors, research and other facilities. Wolf Haven has been providing educational opportunities for visitors about the wolf and its role in the wild. As of April 2014, Wolf Haven installed a bat sign to provide an educational opportunity for visitors to learn about bats and their roles in the wild.

Bats Northwest was contacted by Anne Schuster, an AmeriCorps member for the Center for Natural Lands Management who was working on outreach at Wolf Haven International. In 2012, The Center for Natural Lands Management had installed six new bat houses close to the wetland at Wolf Haven. In 2014, Anne found funding to put up an informational sign near those bat houses. She wanted to add a QR code on the sign linking to Bats Northwest. Of course, we were delighted to partner with Anne, the Center for Natural Lands Management and Wolf Haven in offering more information about bats to the public.

Wolf Haven has a potential 11 of the 15 species of bats that live in Washington state. Some bat species are “Species of Special Concern” and others are candidates under the Endangered Species Act. Wolf Haven also has another candidate species within their boundaries, the Mazama Pocket Gopher.

The new sign — Wolf Haven’s Gone Batty! — includes pictures of the Townsend’s Big Eared Bat (Corynorhinus townsendii) which is a “Species of Concern” bat; Yuma myotis (Myotis yumanensis) and a California myotis (Myotis californicus). The sign compares wolves and bats as a keystone species and lists many benefits of bats.

To read about Wolf Haven and their bats from an article written by Linda Saunders, Conservation Director at Wolf Haven, please check out this web page: http://www.wolfhaven.org/PDF/Batty%20About%20Bats.pdf

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You can also contact Bats Northwest: info@batsnorthwest.org

April 10, 2014
Contact: Dan O’Brien, 517-336-5035 or Ed Golder, 517-284-5815

The Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) and a consortium of partners announced today that the fungus known to cause significant rates of illness and death in North American bats has been detected for the first time within the state’s borders. White-nose syndrome (WNS) has been found in three Michigan counties: Alpena, Dickinson and Mackinac.

“These are the first confirmed WNS cases in Michigan. Even though we’ve known this disease was coming, it is a disappointing day,” said Dr. Dan O’Brien, DNR wildlife veterinarian. “We must now shift gears and try to stop the spread of this serious disease.”

Five little brown bats (Myotis lucifugus) showing disease characteristics were collected in February and March during routine WNS surveillance by Dr. Allen Kurta and Steve Smith, researchers from Eastern Michigan University. White-nose syndrome was diagnosed by Michigan State University’s Diagnostic Center for Population and Animal Health (DCPAH), in cooperation with the DNR Wildlife Disease Laboratory.

“At DCPAH we have to be very patient on emerging diseases and prepare our test capabilities early on so that we are ready when the need for testing arises,” said Dr. Tom Mullaney, DCPAH’s interim director. “We identified the fungus by PCR and through histopathology due to the specific presentation of the lesions. While we regret that this disease has arrived in Michigan, we will work closely with our DNR partners as they continue the next phase of their work.”

The diagnosis was then confirmed by the U.S. Geological Survey’s National Wildlife Health Center in Madison, Wis. The bats tested positive for Pseudogymnoascus destructans, the fungus known to be the causative agent of skin lesions observed in all WNS-affected bats.

The disease was first documented in 2006 in a cave in upstate New York. Eleven species of bat have been infected and over 6 million have died.

In 2010, the DNR, along with the agency’s federal and non-governmental partners, developed Michigan’s WNS Response Plan. The plan outlined two main pillars: 1) prevent the arrival and spread of WNS as long as possible by mitigating the human-assisted movement of the fungus that causes the disease; and 2) conserve whatever bat populations remain after the disease has arrived by preserving abandoned underground mines and caves.

In northeastern states, where the bat disease has been present the longest, summer bat populations are down by 70-80 percent, and winter die-offs in some specific caves within the state’s borders have been greater than 90 percent. Biologists believe several bat species may go extinct as a result.

“While there is no connection between WNS and rabies, the DNR and Michigan Department of Community Health caution the public to avoid handling bats because of the health risks for people. Bats in Michigan can carry rabies, a virus that infects the central nervous system of mammals, including people, and causes death in almost all cases. Rabies is most commonly spread by the bite of an infected animal. There are no known harmful effects to humans from WNS.”

“At this point, there is no effective treatment for WNS and no practical way to deliver the treatment to millions of afflicted bats even if treatment existed. Rehabilitation of bats is prohibited in Michigan because of the potential for the exposure of humans to rabies,” said O’Brien. “The best thing the public can do when they find a dying or dead bat is to leave it alone and keep children, livestock and pets away from it.”

Bat die-offs can be reported through an observation report on the DNR website at www.michigan.gov/wildlife or by calling the DNR at 517-336-3050.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service requests that cavers refrain from caving in all WNS-affected states and adjoining states. Cavers also should refrain from caving anywhere during the hibernation period (September – May) to minimize disturbance and mortality to bats.

The loss of bats due to WNS could be economically significant for agriculture and commercial forestry. A reduction in the bat population could lead to an increase in pests that are harmful to crops and trees.

The Michigan Department of Natural Resources is committed to the conservation, protection, management, use and enjoyment of the state’s natural and cultural resources for current and future generations. For more information, go to www.michigan.gov/mdnr.
White-Nose Syndrome Analysis for Washington State
Which bats are at risk, and what can we do to save them?
A Study Done for Bats Northwest

A few months ago, some students at the University of Washington were given the opportunity to do some classwork with real world impact. McKenna Cox, Colleen Crotty, Rebekkah Curtin, Danielle Velott, Jennifer Wang and Tara Wilson decided to focus their project on WNS risk for bats in Washington.
They shared their results with Bats Northwest. Below is the Executive Summary from their paper. The entire paper can be accessed at http://www.batsnorthwest.org/WNS_BatsNorthwest.pdf

Executive Summary
White-nose syndrome (WNS) is a disease recently introduced to North America that is affecting a myriad species of bats, particularly those who hibernate in large aggregations. The disease is still new in North America, and scientists are trying to assess how to manage this epidemic; however, research is still in its infancy. The infectious disease is caused by the fungus Pseudogymnoascus destructans, which, among other symptoms, results in white patches on the muzzles of infected bats. Since WNS was first discovered in a New York cave in 2006, it has been sweeping westward across the United States. This disease threatens the population security of all North American bat species, particularly endangered species, as well as stakeholders who rely on their natural pest control services. This paper attempts to address the following objectives: (1) Can and will P. destructans reach the West Coast? (2) Will Pacific Northwest (PNW) bats be affected and/or suffer from WNS as significantly as their East Coast counterparts? (3) How does the spread of WNS compare to other epizootic diseases?

We outline the nature of the fungus, identify concerned stakeholders, and assess life histories of bats currently affected by WNS to evaluate risk due to biological and genetic similarities of PNW bats. Washington State climate data was obtained to examine environmental probability factors of WNS susceptibility, and the geographic extent of WNS is analyzed to measure general rate of spread. The spread of the amphibian fungus Batrachochytrium dendrobatidis, West Nile Virus, and the Lagos Bat Virus are examined to compare the nature of spread in other epizootic pathogens. This allows us to extrapolate beyond the current range and approximate arrival of WNS to Washington State. Descriptions of current biological control research are outlined, and environmental factors are drawn for the purpose of proactive management.

Oklahoma Removed From List Of Suspected Bat Fungus Areas

May 6, 2014
A service of the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation

After re-examining an Oklahoma bat specimen originally tested in 2010, scientists with the U.S. Geological Survey National Wildlife Health Center have dropped Oklahoma from the list of areas where White-Nose Syndrome in bats has been suspected or confirmed.
The scientists have also removed the Cave Myotis (Myotis velifer) from the list of bat species that have tested positive for the fungus (Pseudogymnoascus destructans) that has been associated with White-Nose Syndrome, which since 2006 has killed millions of hibernating bats primarily in the eastern United States and Canada.
The Oklahoma specimen was collected in a private Woodward County cave in May 2010, and at the time appeared to have the fungus. While original test results were positive for the fungus associated with White-Nose Syndrome, new testing procedures have revealed the bat was not infected with the fungus and did not show characteristic lesions.

Five bats tested from that private cave in 2010-11, along with 81 swabs from that cave and surrounding caves taken in 2013-14, failed to show the presence of the fungus. This monitoring will continue in 24 caves across the state.

Shortly after the suspected case of White-Nose Syndrome, the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation created the Oklahoma Bat Coordinating Team, composed of at least 20 entities that have direct bat and cave management responsibilities. The team created a communication plan involving scientific cooperators, interested parties, stakeholders and user groups on bat and cave management, bat research and bat diseases in Oklahoma. The team has been active in creating the state’s White-Nose Syndrome Response Plan and participating in disease surveillance work in multiple cave systems in Oklahoma.

For more information on White-Nose Syndrome, visit whitenosesyndrome.org.
For general information on bats including White-Nose Syndrome, visit wildlifedepartment.com.
News Contacts: Don P. Brown or Micah Holmes (405) 521-4632 Website: www.wildlifedepartment.com E-mail: info@odwc.state.ok.us U.S. Geological Survey case review letter at https://www.whitenosesyndrome.org/sites/default/files/files/case_review_23042_april_2014_0.docx Source: Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation at https://www.whitenosesyndrome.org/partner/oklahoma-department-wildlife-conservation

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Source: Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation at https://www.whitenosesyndrome.org/partner/oklahoma-department-wildlife-conservation

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Many bat sites on the Web provide worthy information and great photos from around the world. BATS NORTHWEST is focused on our regional bats, but there is so much to learn about bat conservation worldwide. You may enjoy visiting some of the sites listed on our Resource Page at: http://www.batsnorthwest.org/resources.html
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White-Nose Syndrome Confirmed In Bats In Michigan

April 10, 2014

Contact: Dan O’Brien, 517-336-5035 or Ed Golder, 517-284-5815

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“These are the first confirmed WNS cases in Michigan. Even though we’ve known this disease was coming, it is a disappointing day,” said Dr. Dan O’Brien, DNR wildlife veterinarian. “We know the risk of exposure for exposure is high, and we regret that this disease is here.”

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Deadly Bat Disease Detected In Single Wisconsin Site; State Joins 23 Others In Confirming White-Nose Syndrome

News Release Published: April 10, 2014 by the Central Office

Contact(s): Erin Crain, 608-267-7479; Paul White, 608-267-0813 Owen Boyle, 608-266-5244

MADISON - White-nose syndrome, a bat disease that has spread to 23 states and killed up to 5 million bats since 2006, has been confirmed in Wisconsin, state natural resources officials announced today.

One of the bats from the Grant County mine that was confirmed to have white-nose syndrome.

The disease was first discovered in the northeastern United States in 2006 and has since spread across the U.S. and into Canada, where it has been found in seven states. It is not known how it entered Wisconsin, but DNR bat crews had been wrapping up winter surveillance efforts for 2014 when they discovered 11 individual bats with the classic signs of white-nose syndrome in the Grant County mine. The mine is within flying distance for bats from a site in Illinois where white-nose syndrome had been confirmed in 2012.

Batscrew collected two of the bats for genetic and other laboratory testing; the results came back early April and were positive.

The same mine had been examined as recently as December as part of a study and had no visual signs of white-nose syndrome at that time, Crain says. All four species of bats that hibernate in Wisconsin cave and mine sites have been documented in this particular mine, giving it the potential of work to raise bats.

Next steps in efforts to save bats

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How citizens can help, including reporting sick or dead bats

Wisconsin citizens can help bats by continuing to avoid disturbing bats, especially during hibernation; by following all decontamination requirements for those who enter caves or mines, and by continuing to volunteer to monitor bat populations in Wisconsin through a variety of opportunities. Wisconsin’s four bat cave species are listed as threatened, a status which makes it illegal to kill them or take action that would result in their death. Learn more about bats and volunteering opportunities on DNR’s Bat Program website, found at http://www.dnr.wi.gov/topic/batinfo/batinfo.html.

People who see sick or dead bats are encouraged to report them to DNR. DNR’s Bat Program website, has a link to the reporting form and instructions for how to safely collect carcasses of dead bats. People should not handle the bats without appropriate protective clothing.

Now more than ever we need Wisconsinites’ help to keep our bats as healthy as they can heading into next year’s hibernation period and the challenges they will face,” Crain says.

The Bat Scientists: by Mary Kay Carson (2010)

ISBN10: 0544104935
https://www.powells.com/biblio/1-9780544104938-0

I recently spotted this book while at my local Greenwood library, so thought I’d check it out. While it is a young adult/kids book, the information is straightforward and it would serve as a good intro to bats for any adult interested in them, too.

What caught my eye initially is that it is an oversized book with nice, large color photos on nearly every page. After seeing the big photos here, you might think the bats are life size - most aren’t, as most bats seen in the USA are pretty small when compared to the flying foxes and other species overseas.

The book also gives a good intro to Dr Merlin Tuttle, founder of Bat Conservation International, and I liked the great photos and the fact that the book (dated 2010) covers other areas of conservation work, including bat houses and the recent plague of White-Nose Syndrome, which is unfortunately still spreading across the country. The book also covers the many benefits of bats to humans and plant life and has many nice diagrams of bat anatomy, how caves keep bats safe and at proper temperatures for hibernation/ survival, and their amazing ability to identify one another in colonies of literally millions of bats (e.g. Bracken Bat Cave near San Antonio, TX).

I think my only nit about this book is the somewhat lopsided focus on BCI’s activities in Texas vs. conservation and studies elsewhere - I would have liked to see more information about European bats, flying foxes or the like.

To sum up, this is a quick, informative read and would be a great study aid in the classroom or at home - and you can’t beat the photos, unless you simply had more of them.

Kevin Orme, Bats Northwest member

Seattle

Green Lake Bat Walks 2014

Day Date Sunset Time Batwalk Start

Tues June 3 9:01 pm 8:00 pm
Thurs June 19 9:10 pm 8:15 pm
Wed July 2 9:10 pm 8:15 pm
Mon July 14 9:04 pm 8:00 pm
Wed July 30 8:46 pm 7:45 pm
Fri Aug 15 8:21 pm 7:30 pm
Mon Aug 25 8:03 pm 7:00 pm
Tues Sept. 11 7:29 pm 6:30 pm

These public programs will be held near the Bathhouse Theater on the northwest side of Green Lake in Seattle. We will meet on the grassy knoll with picnic tables located across the walking path from the theater at the Start Times listed above. Since the program will begin before sunset and continue after dark, you should dress appropriately for the weather conditions on the evening of the event. We look forward to seeing all of you at these events and to the opportunity to entertain you and educate you about bats.

206.256.0406
www.batsnorthwest.org
Become a Bats Northwest Member
Join us in the adventure to learn more about our bat neighbors!

Membership Options: $35  $50  $75  $100  Other

Name: __________________________________________________________
Address: _______________________________________________________________________________________
Phone: _______________________________________________________________________________________
Email: _______________________________________________________________________________________

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206.256.0406
Bats Northwest web site: www.batsnorthwest.org

An Uncle George Bat House Travels to British Columbia

by Meg Lunnum

In November 2013, Bats Northwest was contacted by a gentleman in Langley, British Columbia requesting a bat house. Kirk “Myotis” had done his homework and was asking about an “Uncle George”. He had read that the “Uncle George” has good results for the Pacific Northwest. The “Uncle George” bat house was designed by Greg Falxa (Cascadia Research), “Uncle George” Carlson and Sanders Freed (Nature Conservancy). They have reported that bats move into the Uncle George fairly soon after installation.

At the time, we were waiting for our bat house builder, Tom, to finish up the Uncle Georges he was making. In December, the bat houses were ready. Bats Northwest contacted Kirk to make arrangements for a meeting. Saturday, December 14, was the chosen day. Kirk and his wife drove down from B.C. and we met along I-5. Unfortunately, by coming early in December, Kirk’s wife wouldn’t be surprised when she received a bat house as her Christmas gift.

Three months later, in March, the “Uncle George” was installed in Kirk’s backyard. The bat house is 18 feet high, south facing and 5 feet from a tree line. Kirk used directions from Bat Conservation International to install the house.

In an email, Kirk said “All last summer bats flew through our back yard on their way to feeding grounds, so our wings are crossed for good luck that they will decide to stay in our house.

Three neighbors were very interested and pleased, all acknowledging the importance of bats...a fourth is not at all happy. Little does she know of how close it was to being put up in the front yard!

Part 2: We are starting our night garden this week, hope it will also be a success (an idea we got from your web site)”. Kirk “Myotis” also added: KEEP CALM AND BAT ON!

If anyone is interested in building an Uncle George bat house or a rocket box, plans are on our web site at: http://www.batsnorthwest.org/bat_houses.html

We do have both the rocket box and the Uncle George (small and large) bat houses available for a donation. Please contact Bats Northwest at info@batsnorthwest.org if you are interested. Pick up is at our monthly meeting, every second Tuesday, at our office in Magnuson Park, Building 30, Seattle.

Picture is from March 26, 2014.