



White-Nose Syndrome of Bats

The National Park Service (NPS) preserves, protects, and shares the legacies of treasured resources set aside by the American people as the national park system. In meeting this mission, the NPS exercises its mandate for wildlife management in NPS units. White-nose syndrome (WNS) is threatening bat conservation as well as visitor use of some recreational caves and enjoyment of bats in NPS units.

What is at risk from WNS?

NPS manages 84 million acres in 398 units. Nearly 1 in 4 NPS units have caves, and 1 in 3 contain mines that can provide habitat for bats and other organisms.

Nation-wide about 40 species of bats occur in NPS units, including 7 species that are Federally listed as threatened or endangered, and numerous other species that are State listed. Bats have important ecosystem functions including roles as insect-eaters, pollinators, and seed dispersers, as well as serving as prey themselves.

In states where WNS has been detected to date, NPS units are home to numerous species of insect-eating bats, including 4 species that are endangered. WNS or *G. destructans*, the causative agent of WNS, have now been found in or immediately adjacent to 10 NPS units:

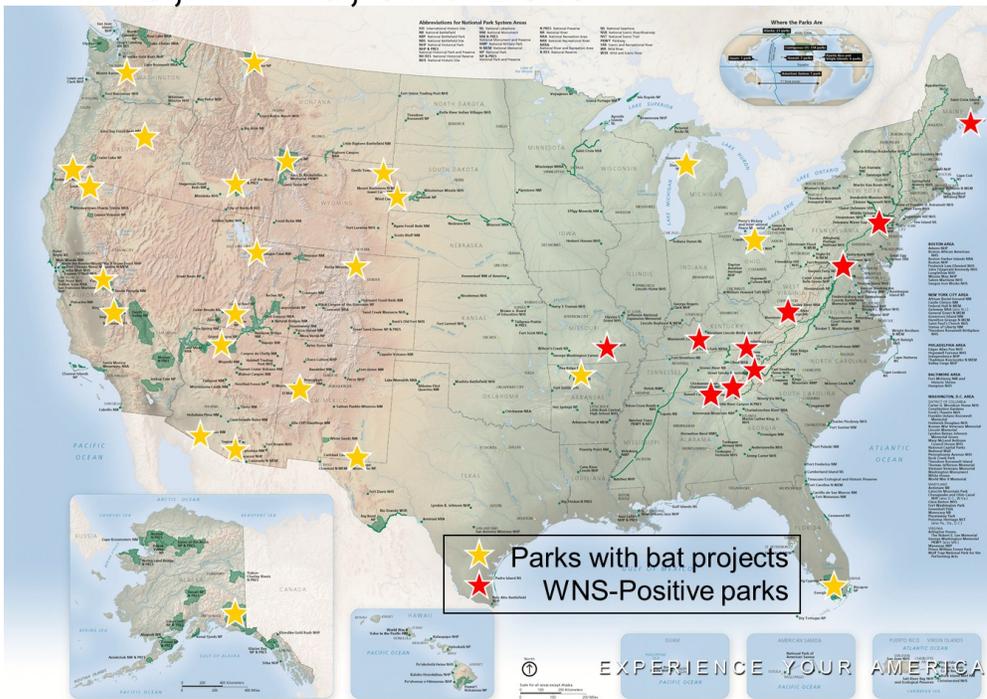
- Acadia National Park, ME
- Chesapeake and Ohio Canal National Historical Park, MD
- Chickamauga and Chattanooga National Military Park, TN, GA
- Cumberland Gap National Historical Park, VA
- Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area, PA, NJ
- Great Smoky Mountains National Park, TN
- Mammoth Cave National Park, KY
- New River Gorge National River, WV
- Ozark National Scenic Riverways, MO
- Russell Cave National Monument, AL

NPS units welcome over 270 million visitors per year. Caves are the primary attraction at some national parks such as Mammoth Cave and Carlsbad Caverns, and wild caves are a secondary attraction at numerous NPS units.

How is NPS addressing WNS?

- Parks with cave resources are updating their Cave Management Plans or using other means to identify and implement actions that minimize the risk of WNS spreading *into* uninfected parks and *from* infected parks. These actions include providing extensive WNS education materials; screening visitors and gear; disinfection; and, when necessary, closure of cave resources.
- **Access to all NPS caves is restricted to those who hold appropriate permits or tour tickets.** Show caves such as those located in Cumberland Gap National Historic Park, Jewel Cave National Monument, Mammoth Cave National Park, Timpanogos National Monument remain open with precautions in place.
- The NPS Abandoned Mineral Lands Program requires all inspectors, surveyors, and contractors to use new gear or to disinfect gear protocols prior to working in NPS mines.
- NPS wildlife veterinarians are providing service-wide coordination on WNS surveillance and management, and partnering with other Federal and State agencies in national coordination efforts.
- The NPS Office of Public Health has issued the following statement on WNS: The human health risk from WNS is unknown but appears to be low. No human illnesses to date have been associated with contact or exposure to WNS-infected bats or caves. In addition, *G. destructans* only grows at temperatures well below human body temperature so infection is very unlikely.

NPS, WNS, and Bats



More Information

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