



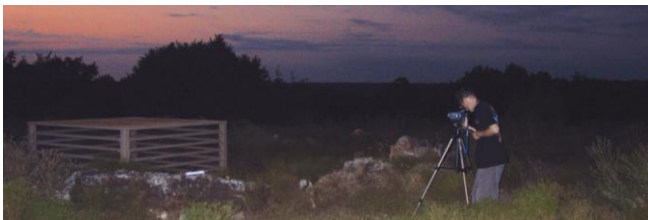
Emerging Threat to America's Bats: White-Nose Syndrome

Project # 09-445

Background:

White-nose syndrome (WNS) is causing the most precipitous decline North American wildlife this century. WNS has killed an estimated 1 million bats in the past 4 years and 25 species throughout North America likely are at risk. At the June 2008 Integrated Natural Resource Management Plans (INRMPs)/State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP) meeting in Boston, White-Nose Syndrome was recognized as an emerging priority issue by attending representatives of Department of Defense (DoD) installations, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), and state fish and wildlife agencies. Military installations provide habitat to many of America's bats—including endangered species such as the Indiana and gray bats.

For more than a decade, DoD has invested money, energy and expertise in protecting endangered species present on installations. Bat conservation has been particularly successful—from early partnerships with BCI to train DoD biologists to habitat assessment and protection activities on military land across the country—from work in caves and mines on western bases and training lands to recent training (by military professionals) of bat experts in the use of thermal imaging technology the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers modified specifically for use in counting federally endangered bat species. White-Nose Syndrome could nullify these years of collaboration and investment.



Bat-friendly cupola installed over entrance to Shell Mountain Bat Cave at Fort Hood, TX.

Objective:

Site by site, species by species, agency by agency, installation by installation, university by university—many constituents are following developments closely. This project was designed to share critical updates and foster cooperative strategies for dealing with this potentially catastrophic disease. DoD partners are very important land stewards for a considerable amount of bat habitat in the WNS impact zone.

Summary of Approach:

As WNS continues to spread, meetings of key WNS constituents are even more urgently needed. Using DoD Legacy funding for a strategic WNS forum allowed regional input, information sharing and planning as the WNS threat expands in range. WNS forum efforts included a combination of events—including key state or regional gatherings and additional strategic conference calls that emerge during the funding interval.

Benefit:

Many U.S. military installations provide habitat to America's bats—including endangered species such as the Indiana and gray bats. Protection and conservation of plants, wildlife and habitat—particularly related to threatened and endangered species—on military installations and Department of Defense land is becoming an increasingly important mission for all branches of the Service, including the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. BCI's work in the past year conducted with support from the DoD Legacy Program has raised the awareness among partners of the role of the military in the growing response to WNS. For example, at the 2009 WNS Symposium, the banner that greeted all participants at the event credited DoD with sponsorship and support of national WNS programming. The meetings and planning events outlined above and funded in part by the Legacy Program have laid the framework for helping the military develop a response strategy to WNS. All of the efforts to date support these management recommendations in INRMPs in regions where WNS is taking a toll.

Accomplishments:

WNS Forum efforts to date include 1) UFWS-led teleconference; 2) WNS planning workshop at the Western Bat Working Group Biennial Conference ; 3) WNS Science Strategy Meeting; 4) national WNS Symposium; and 5) April 2009 meeting of federal, state and local agencies, private organizations, and universities who subsequently briefed congressional staff WNS.

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