

From: Douglas Fullman
Sent: Mon 2/4/2008 5:25 PM
Subject: Wintering Bat Disease Found in Parts of the Northeast.

Dear Scout Executive:

We have been made aware of this problems and alert concerning Bats.

You may wish to advise Scout Troops and Venturing Groups of this potential problems, especially if you process Tour Permits for Spelunking and/or Caving in natural caves or mines.

Although the following alert was released by the New Jersey Department of Health, it has Northeast Region Implications.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Feb. 4, 2008

Contact: Darlene Yuhas (609) 984-1795
Elaine Makatura (609) 292-2994

MYSTERIOUS ILLNESS KILLING BATS IN NORTHEAST PROMPTS PRECAUTIONS AS WILDLIFE RESEARCHERS SEARCH FOR ANSWERS

(08/08) TRENTON * Amid mounting concern over the unexplained deaths of thousands of hibernating bats in New York and Vermont, Department of Environmental Protection Commissioner Lisa P. Jackson today advised the public to avoid entering any caves and mines that might harbor the creatures until wildlife experts know more about the problem.

"We have not yet found any evidence of disease among New Jersey's wintering bat populations," Commissioner Jackson said. "But until experts fully understand how and why bats in other states are dying, and whether it's possible for people to carry this mysterious illness from one cave to another, it is best to take precautions and keep out of places in which they hibernate."

Hikers, photographers and spelunkers are among those who frequent abandoned mines, caves and other locations that likely shelter hibernating bats.

Wildlife officials are calling the illness "white nose syndrome" because the most obvious symptom is a white fungus that forms around the noses of some, but not all, of the afflicted bats. Researchers do not yet know if the fungus actually causes death, but they have observed that bats with white nose syndrome deplete their fat reserves months before they would normally emerge from hibernation, and die as a result.

In the coming weeks, New Jersey biologists will survey the state's largest known hibernaculum to look for bats exhibiting symptoms of the disease. To date, there is no information showing people have been affected after exposure to the white fungus, so human-health implications remain unknown.

Last year, in several caves near Albany, N.Y., up to 11,000 bats * more than half of that area's wintering population * were found dead, and many showed symptoms of the mysterious disease. Biologists this year are again seeing the white fungus on bats hibernating in New York and southwest Vermont. Because bats migrate hundreds of miles to their summer range, impacts to hibernating bats can have significant implications for the species throughout the Northeast.

Bat biologists across the country are evaluating strategies to monitor the presence of the disease and collect specimens for laboratory analysis. To avoid the possibility of spreading the disease, biologists are taking precautions, using sanitary clothing and respirators when entering caves.

The affected species include the Indiana bat, listed as endangered in New Jersey and nationwide. Wildlife experts report that little brown bats are sustaining the largest number of deaths, along with northern long-eared, eastern pipistrelle and other bat species using the same caves.

Hibernating bats are particularly vulnerable to disease or disturbance because they congregate in large numbers in caves and mines, forming tight clusters of 300 per square foot in some locations. Of the tens of thousands of bats known to hibernate in New Jersey, most occupy a handful of abandoned mines.

###

This message has been sent by the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection. To unsubscribe from this list, please go to:

<http://www.nj.gov/dep/newsrel/unsub.htm>

XX
XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

Best wishes

Douglas C. Fullman
Associate Regional Director/Program
Northeast Region, Boy Scouts of America
10 Centre Dr, PO Box 268
Jamesburg, NJ 08831-0268
B: (609) 655-6317 Fax: (609) 655-3699
H: (609) 275-4965 Cell: (908) 208-6090
Secretary: Sandra Reti (609) 655-6318 SReti@netbsa.org