

WNS IDENTIFIED AT SIX SITES IN PENNSYLVANIA

HARRISBURG – As Pennsylvania Game Commission wildlife biologists continue to monitor bat hibernacula, the number of sites where bats have been confirmed infected or dying from White Nose Syndrome (WNS) has risen to six. The sites are two abandoned mines near Carbondale, Lackawanna County; an abandoned mine near Shickshinny, Luzerne County; and the abandoned Shindle Iron Mine, Aitkin Cave and Seawra Cave in Mifflin County.

“We continue to receive information from local residents, as well as landowners with caves and old mine entrances on their properties,” said Carl G. Roe, Game Commission executive director. “We’re asking people who encounter five or more dead or dying bats in an area to contact us, as we’d really like to know about these types of incidents.

“However, we don’t want people to go out of their way by going in caves or mines or underground. Also, do not handle bats – dead or alive – and keep children and pets away from grounded bats. Even though there currently are no known human health implications associated with WNS, the Game Commission would prefer people not handle any bats; we’ll take care of all of that. We just need residents to let us know if they find dead or dying bats.”

There are two quick and easy ways to report sick-acting or dead bats this winter. The first is by calling the nearest Game Commission region office. The second is by using the Game Commission’s “[Report Sick Bats](#)” form that can be accessed in the left-hand column of the agency’s homepage (www.pgc.state.pa.us).

One of the landowners who the agency is working with is The Nature Conservancy, which owns the property on which Aitkin Cave is situated.

“Since WNS now has been identified in Aitkin Cave, it will remain closed to the public, and we will continue to work with Game Commission to monitor the situation for the bat population,” said Scott Bearer, Ph.D., Forest Ecologist for The Nature Conservancy. “Our hope is that the bats will recover. However, the truth is we could expect to see large numbers of bats dying in the next few weeks at or near the entrance.”

For more information, please see the Game Commission’s “[Report Sick Bats](#)” page in the left-hand column of the agency’s homepage (www.pgc.state.pa.us).

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