



# Canadian Wildlife Health Cooperative Réseau canadien de la Santé de la Faune

## National Office

Western College of Veterinary Medicine  
52 Campus Dr, Saskatoon, SK S7N 5B4  
National Information Line: 800.567.2033 (inside Canada only)  
National Information Line: 306.966.5099 (from Anywhere)



**The following is taken from the US Communications and Outreach Working Group with modifications for Canadian audiences. If you have questions or comments about these messages, please contact myself, or your local wildlife official (found on [http://www.ccwhc.ca/white\\_nose\\_syndrome.php](http://www.ccwhc.ca/white_nose_syndrome.php)).**

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### **If you had two minutes to tell someone about white-nose syndrome, what would you say?**

The White-nose Syndrome Communications and Outreach Working Group developed messages to help answer this question so you can influence what people know, feel and do about white-nose syndrome!

Our working group, comprised of representatives from federal and state agencies and non-governmental groups, created these messages over a nine-month period. We began with the help of a professional communicator, who posed the following questions:

1. What do people need to know about bat conservation and natural history to understand why white-nose syndrome is such a concern?
2. What has the white-nose syndrome community done or learned that others need to know?
3. What do we need people to do now to help bat populations?

From this, we developed draft messages and tested them at a national white-nose syndrome workshop in Boise, Idaho. We revised the messages based on feedback and then solicited comments from the white-nose syndrome national response team on a regularly scheduled teleconference and through working group contacts. We used the comments we received to produce the final version of the messages, below.

If you talk to the public, please use the messages on pages 2-3 of this document to help the national response team speak in a unified voice about white-nose syndrome. We developed four main messages, along with supporting points, to communicate with audiences without a scientific background. This includes media communications, community outreach talks, websites, FAQ documents, social media and more.

Please note that some of these messages are about bats in general. Knowing the bats in your area will help you tailor the messages to be appropriate for your needs.



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If you have questions or comments about these messages, please contact me or a member of the White-nose Syndrome Communication Working Team (listed at the end of this document).

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### 1. Main message 1

Bats are fascinating animals that are vital for a healthy environment, eating tons of insects nightly, benefitting our crops, our forests and us.

- 1.1. Bats are our primary nighttime insect predators. They can eat up to half of their body weight in insects in one night! [Use a human analogy for how much food this is.] They eat forest and crop pests as well as human pests (mosquitoes).
- 1.2. Studying bats has led to advancements in science and medicine, including information on hearing (sonar), the immune system (vaccine development) and basics like how blood coagulates.

### 2. Main message 2:

We're rapidly losing millions of our bats to a disease called white-nose syndrome so protecting bats from other threats is important.

- 2.1. We've lost 6 million bats in six years.
- 2.2. Experts fear that some bats are becoming extinct in certain regions.
- 2.3. A fungus that is not native to North America causes this disease.
- 2.4. Other threats to bats include habitat loss, pesticide use and direct harm [use examples from your area, such as wind energy development, oil and gas exploration, residential and industrial development, disturbance of hibernating bats and eviction of bats from buildings]. It's complicated!

### 3. Main message 3:

Scientists from around the world are working together to understand what our bats need, how to protect bats, how to help them survive white-nose syndrome, how this disease affects bats and ways to stop it.

- 3.1. Research includes monitoring bat populations, creating and testing artificial hibernation sites and reducing impacts of the disease through treatment and biological control. An example of biological control is using live bacteria or fungi to reduce the fungus that causes white-nose syndrome.
- 3.2. People are asked to stay out of hibernation sites to reduce disturbance to bats and unintentional spread of the fungus.
- 3.3. Although the fungus is primarily spread by bats, people entering caves and mines are asked to follow standard decontamination guidelines to clean the disease-causing fungus off clothing and gear and not to move gear from sites with the fungus to sites without it.



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- 3.4. Scientists are investigating why some bats survive white-nose syndrome. Research includes marking bats to track individuals over time, exploring differences in survival and testing to see if bats survive repeated exposure to the fungus.

#### 4. Main Message 4

You can help bats.

- 4.1. Learn more about bats and their value and share what you know with others. Visit the [www.whitenosesyndrome.org](http://www.whitenosesyndrome.org) and [http://www.cwhc-rcsf.ca/white\\_nose\\_syndrome.php](http://www.cwhc-rcsf.ca/white_nose_syndrome.php) websites for more information.
- 4.2. If you find a bat that is sick, injured or in a place where you don't want it, contact your local wildlife agency.
- 4.3. Stay out of sites where bats are hibernating and decontaminate your gear and clothes whenever you go underground.
- 4.4. Volunteer to find and count bats. Contact your local wildlife agency.
- 4.5. Contact your provincial or federal legislators to increase funding for white-nose syndrome work. [Don't use this message if your agency has anti-lobbying regulations that prohibit this. Know your policies!]
- 4.6. Bats might use your property! Learn more about bat-friendly practices by contacting your local wildlife agency.
- 4.7. Best- management practices are available for many types of land use. Contact your local wildlife agency for more information.



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