



## Dear Wilderness Defender,

'White-nose syndrome' is decimating North America's bat populations in eastern Canada and the US; it may spread to over a million Alberta bats in just a few years. To obtain the critical research and habitat protection needed to stop this epidemic and save these bat populations, your voice is needed. Please write a note asking Environment Minister Peter Kent to act on scientists' urgent recommendations made over a year ago to designate three hibernating bat species as Endangered.  
- Carolyn Campbell, AWA Conservation Specialist

## In This Issue:

Bats Need Your Help

AWA  
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## The Issue

'White-nose syndrome' in bats is causing the most rapid declines of any wild Canadian mammals in recorded history. In February 2012, the Canadian government's own endangered wildlife committee (COSEWIC) [recommended](#) that the Environment Minister issue an Emergency order to list 3 bat species as Endangered. Two of these species occur in Alberta, including our most common bat, the little brown bat. White-nose syndrome (WNS) has not yet entered Alberta, but is at Lake Superior spreading westwards through bat populations at 200-400 km/year.

The Environment Minister has still not acted on COSEWIC's recommendations to list the bats as Endangered. In April 2013, Environment Canada committed funds for a WNS research coordinator. This is a step forward, but still far short of the crucial boost to public support, research and habitat protection that would come from following COSEWIC's recommendation for the emergency listing of these bats as 'Endangered'.

## Background

Alberta's bats feed at night on large quantities of insects, and are considered important for both forest and agriculture insect management. [Canadian bat scientists have warned](#) that dramatic declines in summer bat activity have been recorded where WNS has hit, and there is the potential for an ecological disaster that would completely change ecosystems, in a manner similar to the virtual elimination of Atlantic cod.

Wild bats can live 20-30 years. They reproduce slowly, often with only one young per year, so populations cannot easily be replaced. During winter, when there are no active insect populations, bats either hibernate or migrate south. Six of Alberta's nine bat species hibernate, including the little brown bat, which at an estimated population of 1-1.5 million is Alberta's most common bat.

White-nose syndrome is caused by a fungus that spreads among hibernating bats. Bats in Europe co-evolved with this fungus, which is found in caves there; people accidentally brought the fungus into caves of hibernating North American bats, which have no immunity to it. Infected bats 'wake up' too soon during winter; they cannot survive the combination of infection, depleted fat reserves and no food sources.

In 2006, WNS was first detected in North America in hibernating bats in upstate New York. Now it is spreading rapidly through the Maritimes, Quebec and Ontario. In five US states where WNS has occurred, monitored bat populations have

dropped 88%; in three Ontario sites, population declines ranged from 82-99% in just a few years.

[Link to AWA's letter of June 7, 2013 to Environment Minister Peter Kent](#)

#### **Take Action**

Please write a note to Environment Minister Peter Kent with these key points:

- Urge him to follow COSEWIC's February 2012 recommendation to issue an Emergency order listing three bat species as 'Endangered,' because of strong evidence of the imminent danger to their survival from rapidly spreading white-nose syndrome
- 'Endangered' listing will boost research that is crucial to find ways to control white-nose syndrome, and will increase summer and winter habitat protection to raise the bats' survival chances
- 'Endangered' listing will also increase Canadians' awareness of the important ecological role of bats, and encourage Canadians to protect bat habitat
- Swift action is essential to reduce the disease's massive mortality rates and its rapid spread across Canada

Please write:

Hon. Peter Kent  
Minister of the Environment  
Les Terrasses de la Chaudière  
10 Wellington Street, 28<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Gatineau, Quebec K1A 0H3  
E-mail: [Minister@ec.gc.ca](mailto:Minister@ec.gc.ca)

And please send us a copy at [ccampbell@abwild.ca](mailto:ccampbell@abwild.ca)

Thank you for taking action for bats!

***Defending Wild Alberta through Awareness and Action***