

**WBWG White Nose Syndrome subcommittee Conference Call  
March 30, 2010**

Attendants: Diane Probasco, Eric Britzke, Greg Falxa, Derek Hall, Scott Osborn, Pat Ormsbee, Toni Piaggio, Katie Miller

Article on Athlete's Foot treatment for WNS

- Katie Miller had received an article on this topic, published in a San Francisco newspaper, from a member of the NVBWG. She forwarded it to Pat and Toni for verification.
- In the article, it states that John Eisemann at APHIS is conducting research to treat WNS using a fungicide used in the treatment of athlete's foot.
- Toni works with John Eisemann and brought the article to him. John Eisemann was contacted by Alan Hicks to discuss how and what permits might be necessary to use over the counter chemicals (i.e. fungicide) in the treatment of wildlife disease.
- John then used this scenario as an example in a presentation he gave at a recent meeting of the American Chemical Society. A member of the audience was a reporter; this reporter misinterpreted the information and published the article.
- APHIS is not conducting a study using athlete's foot treatment for WNS.

Decontamination Protocol

- Pat updated the group on where the decontamination protocol is in the revision process.
- A draft copy is in an internal review at USFWS, but Pat Ormsbee was asked to review it also.
- There is some concern that some of the chemicals that were previously recommended have been changed or removed from the protocol.
- There will be a final internal review in the next few weeks.
- It will then be sent for external review to those who provided comments on the first draft (those are the people that have used the protocol in the field).

Research Updates

- Joe Okinowski in New York has been doing internal cave testing for the presence of *Geomyces destructans*. Recently, he decided to test his equipment to determine whether or not conidia persists once it leaves the cave. He found residual conidia on his backpack, and perhaps other equipment. This provides preliminary evidence that humans have the potential to spread WNS. Alan Hicks is working with Joe Okinowski to write up these results for the bat community.
- Joe Szewzak wrote a paper a few years ago the chemicals present in the fur of *Tadarida brasiliensis*, after noting that they appear to have very few ectoparasites. He clipped fur and found insecticides, herbicides and fungicides present. Pat and

Joe discussed conducting a similar study on COTO, because they have found few ectoparasites on them.

- Toni commented that other researcher, and in her experience, have found high parasite loads on COTO.
- Katie commented that in her experience, as well, COTO have large amounts of ectoparasites.
- Greg mentioned that it couldn't hurt to look at fur clippings for several species. Pat agreed and stated that we should prioritize species for examination.
- Eric reported that there are current studies that are repeating some of the transmission tests by bringing in bats for exposure and testing them for transmission/contraction.
- Eric also reported that Joe Okinowski found viable conidia in the summer and late fall, well beyond the winter hibernating season.
- Greg asked if there are any studies working on identifying *Geomyces destructans* in caves outside the known area of infection. Pat replied that they have not yet found *GD* in caves outside the area of infection, but that there are several problems with trying to isolate and identify its presence in a cave ecosystem.
- Pat reported that she was contacted by Madelyn Bowden, a freelance reporter who is working on an article on WNS preparation in the West for High Country News. Pat provided her with other folks to interview and told the group to email her if they have additional suggestions so that she can provide that information to Madelyn Bowden.
- Greg asked if there is any talk of studying hibernacula to track bats in the fall. Pat responded that there are no impending studies, but it is in our Action Plan. Pat commented that we need to map areas of high likelihood for *Myotis hibernacula*.

### National Plan

- There was a recent meeting in Louisville, KY, funded by AFWA, to develop the base plan for the National Plan. The idea right now is to get the base plan out in the Federal Register and have USFWS treat it as a recovery plan (even though it is not actually a recovery plan). This will allow for full involvement of the needed skill set instead of limiting involvement to state and federal agencies (i.e., NGOs can be involved in its development).
- There is a writing committee and a steering committee that are working on the language for both the base plan and the implementation plan. Eric reported that the size of the break out group for the writing session was too large to actually get much writing done, but that the discussions were productive. There are several Elements to the base plan, including: disease survey, disease management, communication, information dissemination, conservation recovery, and epidemiology. Pat Ormsbee and Kevin Castle (NPS) were representatives from the West.
- The timeline for the National Plan is still uncertain. The base plan is in technical review and should be done by the end of May.

### COTO Captive Colony report

- Toni provided a summary of the COTO captive colony issue at the CRC. The plan was to take 40 *C. townsendii virginianus* out of the wild and into captivity to develop a captive breeding population in case WNS hit their hibernacula. As an endangered species, this was proposed by the USFWS.
- USFWS worked with BCI and rehabilitators to develop a plan and protocol. They had expertise available to advise the group that was to maintain the colony.
- The Smithsonian stepped forward and volunteered to maintain the colony. They sent individuals to Bat World Sanctuary for training with Amanda Lollar.
- As of early March, only 10 bats remain. Additionally, the program lost the main resource for captive COTO, but did use other experts. A consultant was brought in to evaluate the program and this person identified issues with how the CRC was maintaining the colony. This was reported to the USFWS. By this point, about 20 individuals had died.
- In the interim, it appeared that the remaining 20 individuals stabilized, which is when the USFWS came in to check on the colony. By the end of February, 10 more individuals had died and there was no idea why, yet.
- There has been lots of discussion on what went wrong and why and everyone involved bares some of the responsibility for the failure. Although the reports thus far have been fairly one sided, and against the Smithsonian and the CRC.
- Toni attended the recent meeting in March in Georgia among WV Department of Wildlife, BCI, USFWS, and the Smithsonian. Toni reported that the lines of communication have apparently reopened. CRC is again speaking with the bat rehabilitator community, although none of these rehabilitators have had COTO in captive colonies.
- PEER (Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility) submitted a FOIA to the USFWS and asked that their permit be revoked and that the bats be removed and brought into the care of the bat rehabilitator community.
- The OK FWS has been having discussions about what happens if WNS hits *C. townsendii ingens*, as there are only ~800 left in the wild. The Henry Doorly Zoo came forward and expressed interest in housing a captive colony. This pursuit was put on hold because of the FOIA and the issues with the CRC.
- The Henry Doorly Zoo began to pursue the option of housing a captive colony of *C. townsendii pallescens* (a non-endangered species). The issue with this is that the USFWS cannot have any control over the zoo's methodology and protocol because pallescens is not a listed species.
- Pat commented that the original protocol was designed by many people, including bat rehabilitators (Amanda Lollar). The Smithsonian went to the Bat World Sanctuary and had a protocol in place prior to capturing individuals for the colony. Smithsonian has been getting a lot of negative press on this issue, and it doesn't seem to be deserved.
- Toni mentioned that once the colony started to go downhill, rehabilitators were brought onsite and started issues orders to change treatments immediately, sometimes several treatments at once. They did not provide evidence for these changes or a scientific approach to isolate the cause of decline. The CRC and

Smithsonian are scientific entities and need to maintain a methodology throughout the process.

- Katie mentioned the discussion on World Bat Line, an online community for bat rehabilitators. The entire discussion on WBL pointed the finger of blame at the CRC and Smithsonian, and stated that rehabilitators were never involved in the process, which is not true. Eventually, the Smithsonian posted on WBL that they had indeed worked with excellent members of the rehab community. Amanda Lollar never posted on WBL that she was involved in the development of the protocol used at the CRC.
- Eric commented that this experience begs the question, “Is this even a viable option or strategy?” Can *C. townsendii virginianus* or *ingens* be housed in captivity? We need to take a big picture approach to this issue with the costs and species priorities associated with it.
- Greg commented that using a surrogate species seems like a credible approach. It has a precedent in the use of turkey vultures for California condor captive breeding.
- Pat and Toni reported that no COTO have been found with WNS in Hellhole Cave, yet, although *Myotis* species in the cave have contracted it.

#### Action Plan

- Pat and Toni received edits on the document. Idaho Fish and Game used their internal editorial group to consolidate the comments and provided those to Pat and Toni. Neither have yet had a chance to review them.
- Pat commented that because of the sensitivity and controversy with this issue, the methods for revisions must be transparent.

#### Additional Items

- Eric stated that RFPs are being developed for the \$1 million in research funding. The RFPs will be much more specific than previous requests.
- Katie mentioned that she is reading an excellent book about colony collapse disorder in honey bees and that it has several parallels to WNS. She will email the citation to the group.
- Diane checked with Pat to verify that she emailed the most recent signs.

The next conference call is scheduled for May 4<sup>th</sup> at 9am PST.