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EARTH: Mysterious Disease Sounds the Death Knell for Bats

Alexandria, VA –Hundreds of thousands of tiny white-nosed bats have died over the past few winters, falling to cave floors across the eastern United States. The killer is White Nose Syndrome, a mysterious disease inflicted by an unusual cold-loving fungus that attacks bats while they are hibernating. Come spring, as few as 5 percent of the bats in heavily infected roosts are still alive. More than 2 million bats have already been killed by the disease. And the prognosis could get worse, as White Nose Syndrome is spreading westward at an alarming rate.

In response to the crisis, bat research has exploded, as bat ecologists, wildlife pathologists and cave microbiologists scramble to figure out how to quell the onslaught. But, as EARTH explores in its June feature “Mysterious Disease Sounds the Death Knell for Bats,” currently there are more questions than answers about the disease. Will scientists learn enough about this mystifying illness in time to save the bats?

Learn more about White Nose Syndrome and the actions being taken to save the bats, and read other stories on topics such as what scientists are learning from the Japan and New Zealand earthquakes, what legacy can still be found in the sands of the D-Day beaches, and how the Japanese disaster may change the face of nuclear energy worldwide, all in the June issue. Plus, don’t miss the story about how a new ocean basin is opening up in the heart of Africa.

These stories and many more can be found in the June issue of EARTH, now available digitally (<http://www.earthmagazine.org/digital/>) or in print on your local newsstands.

For further information on the June featured article, go to <http://www.earthmagazine.org/earth/article/44d-7db-5-12>

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