**An Examination of the Policy Responses to White-Nose Syndrome**

*By Jordan Hadlock*

White-nose syndrome (WNS) is a fungal disease affecting hibernating bats in North America. The fungus that causes the disease, *Pseudogymnoascus destructans*, was first discovered in North American in 2006 in a cave in New York. Since then, the fungus has spread across the United States and Canada causing a massive wave of disease in bats and significantly decreasing the populations of hibernating bats in North America.

 In the Summer of 2022, I examined the policy responses to white-nose syndrome, their effectiveness, and what could potentially be done to further prevent the fungus from impacting bats. I interviewed a variety of experts in the field of WNS and bats, ranging from government officials, researchers, wildlife veterinarians, and other leading voices in the response to white-nose syndrome. Using qualitative coding software MAXQDA I analyzed government agencies’ response plans, the transcripts of the interviews I performed, and relevant published literature.

 Some of the most consistently received responses compared WNS to other diseases, such as snake fungal disease, Chytridiomycosis, and Covid-19, and discussed charismatic mega-fauna and the Endangered Species Act. These responses described how WNS received far more funding and research than other fungal-based wildlife disease or less publicly valued species such as reptiles and amphibians, but also admitted WNS would never receive as much funding or attention as diseases affecting humans, charismatic mega-fauna, livestock, or commonly hunted species’. Many of the participants seemed content with the amount of funding they received because it was more than they expected.

 The community created through the response to white-nose syndrome is significant and bats health is more recognized now than ever before, but there are many examples of the response to wildlife disease falling short, both in this case and many similar cases. Due to climate change, we only expect to see more disease in wildlife in the coming years. The case of WNS demonstrates that such diseases likely need more attention from scientists and policy makers alike.