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2016 AGM Recap

Janelle VanderBeek, Secretary, WRNBC Board of Directors



Photo: Paul Steeves

The 2016 Wildlife Rehabilitation Conference, hosted by the Wildlife Rescue Association of BC (WRA) on March 4-6, was a wild success. Held at the Executive Inn and Suites in Burnaby, the 2016 WRNBC organizing committee would like to thank all those who attended this collaborative, educational and fun-filled weekend.

On Friday, a capacity crowd of attendees participated in a First Responder Training course presented by the Oiled Wildlife Society (OWS). This day-long educational opportunity featured informational videos, an 'Oiled or Not' photo quiz and presentations that stressed the importance of the less-glamorous tasks required during a spill, namely pre-wash patient stabilization and post-wash patient monitoring. The evening was concluded with an informal ice-breaker held at a cozy, local bistro.

The 2016 Wildlife Rehabilitation Conference included a variety of talented and engaging speakers:

- Alison Moran, working with the Rocky Point Bird Observatory, shared results of her research involving the migration patterns of British Columbia's hummingbirds.
- Felix Martinez represented the South Coast Bat Action Team and shared information on the state of bats in BC, including fascinating audio recordings that demonstrated calls of several local bat species.
- Jessica Myroon, a previous summer staff member with the WRA and a current interior design student at British Columbia Institute of Technology, used her expertise to present invaluable information for the design and construction of a high functioning wildlife hospital. An example that Jessica used featured a wildlife hospital in Germany, a facility that has a secure, one-way entrance-and-exit that allows members of the public to deliver animals to a warm, safe and secure location after hospital hours. Attendees of this presentation were left dreaming of ways to enhance and improve their work spaces.
- Sara Dubois, representative from the BC SPCA, and Angelika Langen, past WRNBC president, presented the most current information and recent updates concerning Schedule C animals and government regulations.
- Lesley Fox from the Fur-Bearer Defenders educated attendees on how to safely open a conibear or leg-hold trap. She also provided information about the laws surrounding trapping in BC.

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In addition to presentations by these speakers, conference attendees were invited to participate in a number of interactive workshops:

- During a laboratory refresher, attendees were able to practice their microscope use and experiment with bloodwork and bio-sample swabs.
- An examination essentials course allowed attendees to evaluate injuries and practice the basics of an initial exam on various species, recently deceased.
- A morning roundtable discussion focused on the views of interns, volunteers and summer students, sharing concerns and considerations associated with working as a wildlife rehabilitator during the busy summer season. Thanks to participants for candid and honest contributions to this discussion. Remember the key point: take your breaks!



Photo: Paul Steeves

concerns and considerations associated with working as a wildlife rehabilitator during the busy summer season. Thanks to participants for candid and honest contributions to this discussion. Remember the key point: take your breaks!

- WRA's Linda Bakker detailed the first of two separate case studies, "500 snakes in one day," a presentation outlining the events associated with a February 2015 intake of more than 500 garter snakes, disturbed by road crews working on the site of their hibernaculum.
- Cale Matesic and Brittany Cook from Salthaven Wildlife Centre in Mount Brydges, Ontario, then presented information about a red-tailed hawk, a story about a medical mystery in which a hawk succumbed to lung problems, suspected as being possibly aspergillosis, tuberculosis or an unknown ailment.
- Ildiko Szabo, assistant curator at UBC's Beaty Biodiversity Museum, finished off the day by demonstrating and narrating several necropsies. Of interest were the varying body conditions of waterfowl, and a bald eagle suspected of having died of lead poisoning whose heart and liver were not as green as expected.

The WRNBC Board of Directors enjoyed catching up with those who attended during the breaks, between speakers and at the guided walks and tours of WRA. Remember, we always welcome your feedback! Contact us with your questions or suggestions. We don't have to wait a year for each AGM! Again, thank you for joining us as it was a very enjoyable weekend!



Photo: Heather Schmitt



Photo: Heather Schmitt

Needed: 2017 AGM Host!

WRNBC is looking for a facility to host the 2017 AGM! Please alert the Board of Directors if you have a lead.

Each year, WRNBC hosts a symposium to provide networking opportunities, continuing education seminars and workshops, and roundtable discussions on current events and research programmes. Expert speakers present on a wide variety of topics, and the AGM also provides an important venue to interact with representatives from various government agencies. Seating for 50 to 100 people would be appropriate for this purpose. WRNBC will be happy to assist in finding a venue, speakers and door prizes. Contact us at info@wrnbc.org.

A Life of Controversy

Janelle VanderBeek, Secretary, WRNBC Board of Directors



Photo: Vancouver Sun

In June 2015, a black bear sow and her two cubs were spotted in Port Hardy, BC. The female was reportedly harvesting salmon from a freezer near a residence. Conservation Officer Bryce Casavant was dispatched to destroy the sow and her two cubs. The mother was destroyed according to policy, but Officer Casavant refused to comply with the order to kill the young bear cubs. Instead the five-month-old cubs were brought to the North Island Wildlife Recovery Association (NIWRA) near Errington, BC, where they were raised with the intent to have them released. Following his actions, the acting Conservation Officer was suspended immediately without pay. This inspired an uproar on social media, inciting petitions signed by tens of thousands to have Officer Casavant reinstated.

One year later, the cubs have been outfitted with tracking collars for post-release monitoring as per the request of government officials. Bryce Casavant has been reinstated but was transferred out of the Conservation Officer Service. Both bear cubs, named Jordan and Athena by the staff and volunteers at NIWRA, have done well in a rehabilitation setting, and were returned to the remote wild of northern Vancouver Island on June 24, 2016 along with six other orphaned bear cubs.

With widespread development of many of BC's prime forested areas, wildlife habitat is feeling the strain of urban encroachment. As a result, the risk of this scenario being repeated is high. As evidenced at each of the member facilities of WRNBC, the stress can be seen through daily intakes of displaced, orphaned or injured creatures. It falls to the organizations and individuals who are most keenly invested in the best interests of BC's wildlife to educate, petition and advocate on behalf of the voiceless creatures who share our beautiful landscape.

Wild ARC's Permit Appeal: Briefing and Update

Kimberly Reid, President, WRNBC Board of Directors

In 2015, Wild ARC's permits changed, restricting the release of the local Schedule C animals that come into their care. After some discussion with the Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations, Wild ARC filed an appeal to the Environmental Appeal Board. Since the members of WRNBC have a vested interest in the outcome of the appeal, the Environmental Appeal Board granted our request to participate in the appeal.

Since October 2015, Wild ARC has submitted their appeal, a rebuttal of the Ministry's response and an unexpected sur-rebuttal. The WRNBC submitted our arguments and the support letters of some of our members, and otherwise supported Wild ARC as best we could. The Ministry also had their opportunity to defend the permit changes through a response and a rebuttal. The final documents were submitted on May 27, 2016.

The Environmental Appeal Board is now reviewing the submissions. We are unsure of how long it will take for the Board to consider all the documents and research all the supporting evidence, but after a long year of preparations we are anxiously awaiting their decision. We will be sure to let you know the outcome of this monumental appeal as soon as we receive notice. For details of the nearly ten years of discussion surrounding Schedule C animals, please see the members-only section of the website: www.wrnbc.org/members-only/.

White-Nose Syndrome

Ana Mendes, Director-at-Large, WRNBC Board of Directors

Nocturnal and secretive, bats play an important role in balancing Canada's ecosystems. At dusk, you might see these flying mammals echolocating for a nightly meal. Did you know that even the tiniest bat will devour hundreds of biting and stinging insects during just one hour of hunting? Afraid of vampire bats or rabies? All Canadian bats eat insects exclusively, and less than 1 percent of wild bats carry rabies.



Photo: Wildlife Rescue Association of BC

What is it?

White-Nose Syndrome (WNS) is an emerging disease of hibernating bats named for the white fungus *Pseudogymnoascus destructans* (*P.d*). Caves, with temperatures between 4 and 15 °C, provide ideal breeding grounds for the disease.

The fungus invades the bat's nose, mouth and wings during hibernation, when metabolism and immune systems are largely shut down. Research indicates that unusual dehydration occurs, causing bats to wake more frequently and burn precious fat reserves required to survive hibernation through the entire winter. Without available food sources, bats become exhausted and emaciated, and eventually die. In some hibernacula, 90 to 100 percent of bats have died due to WNS.

Where is it?

Pre-2006: Noted in EU and AS, minus colony-decimating effect seen in North America (NA).

2006: WNS first recorded in New York, NY.

2010: WNS first recorded in eastern Canada (CA).

Spring 2016: Confirmed case discovered near Seattle, WA. Likely transmitted by poor decontamination protocols in tourism, involving cave exploration.

Present: 5.7 million bats lost to WNS since 2006, eliminating entire colonies, in 29 states (USA) and 5 provinces (CA). Scientists predict WNS disease will soon affect entire western region of NA.



Photo: whitenosesyndrome.org

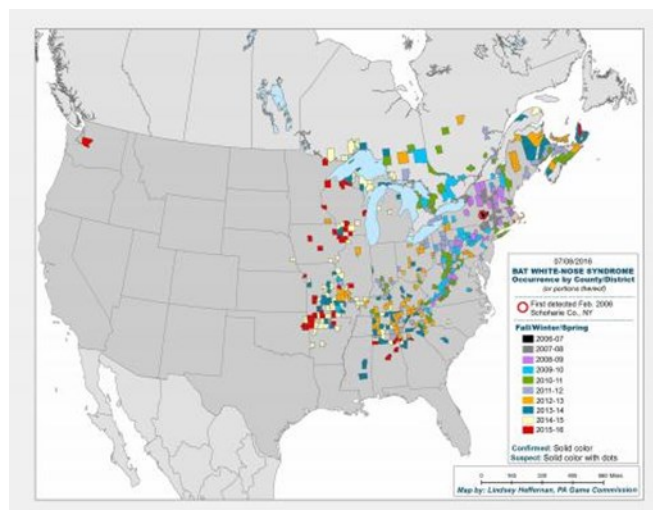


Photo: whitenosesyndrome.org

How did it get there?

WNS is transmitted primarily from bat to bat through physical contact. Some bats have been known to migrate more than 1,000 kilometres from summer roosts to winter hibernacula, prompting rapid spread of the disease.

Human clothing or caving gear inadvertently transmits the fungus from cave to cave as well.

Which bat species are affected?

- Across NA, 7 species confirmed WNS, including 2 endangered species, 1 threatened species.
- Across NA, 5 additional species confirmed with *P.d* present, no WNS confirmed, including 1 endangered species.
- In Canada, 3 main at-risk species include little brown bat, tri-coloured bat and northern myotis, though any cave-dwelling species could be a carrier.

What to look for:

- Strange behaviour during winter months, including flying outside during the day and clustering near the entrances of caves and other hibernation areas
- Visible white fungal growth on the bat's muzzle and/or wing tissue
- Stains or spots on muzzle and wing tissue may become visible under ultraviolet light
- Desiccation of wing tissue
- Dehydration
- Emaciation
- Characteristic skin erosion patterns seen under a microscope



Photo: Wildlife Rescue Association of BC

Treatment:

Scientists are working hard to find a cure, but none exists yet. Trials are underway, and certain species of bacteria appear to inhibit the growth of the fungus.

On May 19, 2015, scientists and conservationists gathered outside the historic Mark Twain Cave Complex in Hannibal, Missouri, to release back into the wild some of the first bats successfully treated for deadly WNS.

Decontamination protocol:

<https://www.whitenosesyndrome.org/resource/national-white-nose-syndrome-decontamination-protocol-april-2016>



Little brown bat with skin infection on wing. Photo: Progressive Animal Welfare Society



Healthy wing on a big brown bat. Photo: Wildlife Rescue Association of BC

Rabies Testing Procedure

The provincial wildlife veterinarian, Dr. Helen Schwantje, has asked that wildlife rescue centres across BC use the following guidelines to determine whether a bat should be admitted.

Proceed through the following list for guidance when you encounter a live or dead bat and need to make a decision on steps to take.

1. Has a person been in “close contact” with a bat that was alive or recently dead (not completely desiccated) (e.g., handled with bare hands, was bitten, scratched or had contact with an open wound on the person)? Or is the person very concerned about the health implications even if you perceive risk to be low?

If there is any doubt of what close contact is, presume **YES** as a precaution because rabies is fatal if not treated.

YES **Go to 2.**

NO **Go to 3.**

2. Advise the person to immediately contact their physician and/or their local public health office.

They will decide if post-exposure prophylaxis (i.e., rabies vaccination) is required and if the bat should be submitted for testing for rabies. If the bat is to be submitted for testing, **the public health office will coordinate the submitting of the bat for rabies testing directly to CFIA. They will usually arrange collection of the bat.** Close contact as described above usually requires human rabies post-exposure treatment and may require testing the bat for rabies as soon as possible.

3. Has a domestic animal (e.g., cat, dog or livestock) been in contact (e.g., bitten, scratched) with the bat? Or is the pet owner concerned about the risk of rabies even if you perceive the risk to be low?

YES **Go to 4.**

4. DO NOT ADMIT THE BAT. The animal owner should be advised to immediately consult with their private veterinarian. If dead, the bat should be kept in a fridge/freezer and taken to the veterinarian. The veterinarian is responsible for risk assessment and may contact the public health veterinarian at the BC Centre for Disease Control at 604-829-2110 for support.

Risk of rabies will be determined partly on the vaccination status of the animal as well as other aspects of the situation. Close contact as described above ALWAYS requires revaccination, and sometimes rapid testing of the bat for rabies or quarantine of the domestic animal. If the bat is to be submitted for rabies testing, **the private veterinarian will submit the bat directly to CFIA. They will NOT usually arrange collection of the bat.** Precautionary action is always advised as rabies is fatal if not treated.

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Outgoing Board Members

The WRNBC Board of Directors recognizes those who are stepping down for their combined 20 years of service to the Network.

A huge THANK YOU to:

Angelika Langen

Angelika is stepping down as president of the Board, though she will still be active as past president, kindly providing guidance and advice to the new Board of Directors.

Marcy Potter

Marcy has served as Treasurer of the Board for eight years. Although she is stepping down, she plans to continue her membership as an active participant of WRNBC.

Lindsaye Akhurst

Lindsaye is stepping down from her position as director-at-large to attend to other important aspects of her life, including family obligations.

Do you have a great rehabilitation case study to share?

Tips and tricks on better practices for a particular species? Share your expert knowledge with us! We would love to feature your submission in our quarterly newsletter. Email your contribution to info@wrnbc.org for our next issue.

Distribution

January

April

July

October

Submission Deadlines

Winter – December 15

Spring – March 15

Summer – June 15

Fall – September 15

Resources for WRNBC Members

Don't forget to check out the members-only section of the WRNBC website for exclusive information, including presentations from previous conferences, government documentation and Schedule C updates. The members-only section also includes interactive best practices sections as well as forums in which centres can engage in discussions and answer questions. The password for the members-only section was sent out via email with your membership renewal.

www.wrnbc.org/members-only/

Need access to the site? Email info@wrnbc.org for the password.

Rehabber Exchange Program

WRNBC is working on an exchange program for member facilities. As part of this program, an organization will trade rehabilitation staff members for a period of time (to be determined). This will encourage growth, promote inter-facility education and establish uniformity of practice across organizations.

If you are interested in participating, or if you have a specific sister-organization that you would like to partner with in this endeavor, please let us know and we will help to facilitate the exchanges.

Contact us at info@wrnbc.org.

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What has your Board of Directors been up to?

- Supporting Wild ARC in their appeal to the Environmental Appeal Board on permitting and Schedule C wildlife issues
- Updating the WRNBC website!
- Preparing for changes to the BC Society Act