

White-Nose Syndrome

FIGURE 1

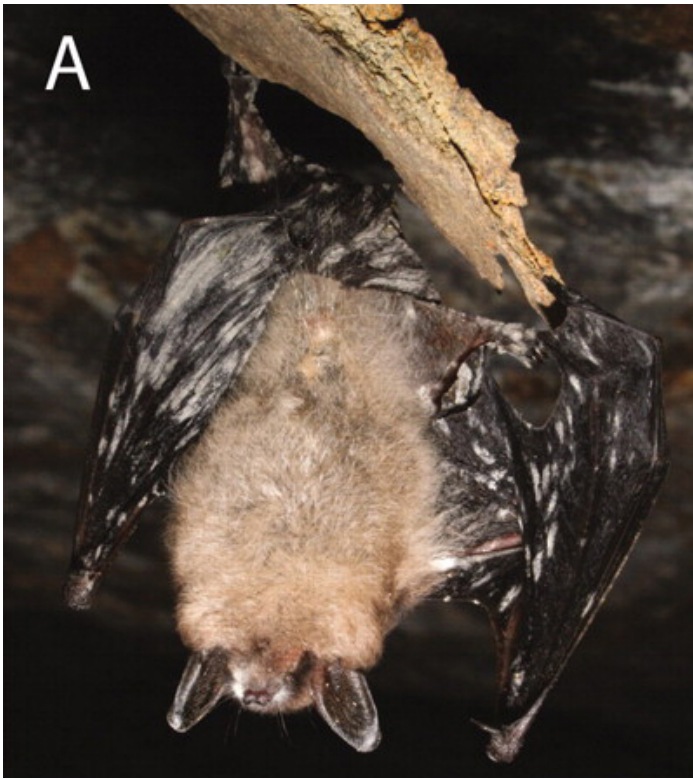


FIGURE 2



BACKGROUND INFORMATION

White-nose syndrome (WNS) is a fungal disease that affects bat species in North America. Bats infected with the fungus that causes WNS wake up from hibernation too early, leading them to use up their energy stores and even die. One bat species affected by WNS is the little brown bat (*Myotis lucifugus*). Little brown bats eat insects, which also hibernate during winter. Because bats with WNS wake up from hibernation early, they cannot find any insects when they wake up and often starve to death. Figure 1 shows a bat with WNS, with fungus present on its wings, ears, nose, and other exposed skin tissues. Figure 2 shows the remains of bat skulls and bones in a bat hibernaculum, the location where bats hibernate, after multiple years of infection.

Since being identified in 2006 in New York, the fungus that causes WNS has killed many bats across the United States and Canada. Because bats play an important role in ecosystems by controlling insect populations, WNS may have far-reaching negative effects. Knowing how WNS affects bat populations will help researchers better understand how to control the spread of the disease and lessen its effects.