



August 13, 2011

The National Speleological Society is pleased to announce a White Nose Syndrome Rapid Response Fund grant award to Kaitlyn Hughes, a University of New Mexico graduate student, in the amount of \$6,120. Her project, entitled, "Natural Micro-biome of Bats," will be done under the auspices of Diana Northup, Ph.D., Principal Investigator, and in cooperation with Debbie Beucher, M.S. It will provide some of the first baseline information on microbiota on bats in the Western United States.

This project will establish some baseline microbiota data on two prominent western bat species that may be susceptible to WNS. The opportunity to collect appropriate samples is being done in conjunction with other baseline data work being carried out by the USGS and a consulting bat biologist. Creating baseline information in the Western U.S., prior to the arrival of WNS, is a priority of the research community.

The two major hypotheses Ms. Hughes is proposing to test are that there will be quite a diversity of natural microbiota on the healthy (non-WNS-exposed) bats, and that there will be no presence of *Geomyces destructans*.

This is the 14th White Nose Syndrome research grant awarded by the NSS from our Rapid Response Fund. The Fund was created in response to a request from the research community following the 2008 Albany WNS Conference. Donations have come from the NSS, the National Speleological Foundation, hundreds of NSS members, grottos, and regions, and from public donations at commercial caves affiliated with the National Caves Association.