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Groups ask feds to say once common bat needs help

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MONTPELIER, VT., — A group of scientists and environmental groups want the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to rule the once-common little brown bat needs federal protection because it is being threatened by a disease that has killed a million bats in the Northeast.

Thomas Kunz, a bat expert from Boston University, says white nose syndrome could cause the little brown bat species to go extinct throughout North America.

Kunz and three environmental groups filed a request Thursday asking the Fish and Wildlife Service to rule the little brown bat needs protection under the Endangered Species Act.

The Center for Biological Diversity of Richmond was among the groups making the request.

White nose syndrome was first identified in upstate New York in 2006. Since then it has spread throughout the region.