



US Salamanders Under Threat From Fungus Spreading Rapidly in Europe

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A study has been published in the Science journal detailing a recently discovered threat to the Salamander population worldwide. This is a deadly fungus that attacks the salamander's skin. It is a close relative of the killer fungus chytrid which decimated huge numbers of frogs. This new threat has been named *Batrachochytrium salamandrivorans*, Bs for short and is rapidly spreading throughout Europe affecting many salamander colonies. Although the disease has not yet arrived in the United States, scientific groups are concerned that imported specimens are at risk of spreading the extremely lethal infection to salamander populations in the United States.

If the disease is permitted to spread to North America, massive numbers of salamanders will die, according to a biologist and attorney with the Center for Biological Diversity, Collette Adkins Giese, who is involved with saving amphibians and endangered reptiles.

White nose syndrome together with chytrid fungus that is killing millions of bats, has exposed the devastating effects of diseases on wildlife. Everything possible needs to be done to protect America's amphibians and to make sure that the disease does not spread.



This fungus appears to attack salamanders specifically and has almost completely destroyed the Netherlands entire fire salamander population, reducing it to just 4% of its numbers over the last four years. The fungus eats through the skin of the amphibians, putting them at risk of fatal bacterial infection. Fortunately other amphibians do not appear to be affected and toads and frogs have been spared.

Lab tests have shown that newts are especially vulnerable to this lethal disease. Newts are a relative of the salamander. The United States is home to several varieties of newts, that include the eastern newt, commonly found in aquariums, which can be purchased or found in the wild.

Georgia and Florida have the striped newt, which since 2011 has been a prime candidate for inclusion on the Endangered Species Act.