



# Going to Bat

## for Nature's Furry Fliers

**B**ats probably won't ever be on your favorite animal list for several reasons. First of all, they are not exactly cute and cuddly. Secondly, they have a spooky lifestyle. Any animal that sleeps upside down all day in a dark cave or attic and then, at dusk, turns into a stealthy, flying night creature, seems a little creepy. Then there are those horror-filled books and movies linking bats and vampires. And what about bats being carriers of diseases? Is it any wonder that these nocturnal fliers are one of nature's most feared and detested organisms?

Actually, it's a shame that bats have gotten such a bad rap because they really do have some rather amazing features. Can you think of something positive or interesting to say about bats? If not, maybe it's time to chase away the myths and discover the cool truths about these mysterious and misunderstood members of the animal kingdom.



### Masters of the Night

It's easy to forget that bats are actually mammals. Animals that have fur, give live birth and nurse their young are typically either walkers, diggers, jumpers, gliders or swimmers. Bats definitely do not fit the usual image of a mammal in motion; in fact, they were once thought to be featherless birds!

Curiously, they are equipped with wings of thin layers of skin stretched over arm and finger bones, built to withstand strong muscular movements, similar to the butterfly stroke. With this powered flight, they appear to be acrobatic showoffs as they dip, dive and swoop through the evening air.

At rest time, they roost upside down, in high places that predators cannot reach. Snoozing all day wrapped in their powerful wings, they are totally unaware that they are the only mammals on earth to possess the super power of flight!

### Sonic Specialists



Have you heard the expression, blind as a bat, and wondered why it doesn't bump into things while flying around in the dark? The truth is ... bats have perfectly good eyesight in the daylight.

However, at night they rely on their keen sense of hearing for navigating in shadowy blackness. During flight, bats send out a series of high-pitched squeaks that hit objects and bounce back like an echo. Amazingly, the bat is able to tell the size and distance of the object by using this special adaptation called echolocation.

Thanks to their incredible natural sonar abilities, bats have the super power to "see" with their ears ... how cool is that?



### Beneficial Winged Wonders

There are over 1,000 species of bats world-wide. Some eat insects ... lots and lots of insects ... like half of their body weight every night! Others eat fruits and help disperse seeds for future plants. And still others eat pollen and, like bees, help with pollination. So, if you hate mosquitos and flies and like bananas or avocados, thank a bat.

### Bat Myths Busted

It's been said that bats are "myth-understood" because of the legends/folklore that follow them wherever they fly. Thankfully, science can shine light on the untruths and set the record straight, as it has with the "blind as a bat" nonsense.

**Myth: Bats try to make nests in one's hair.**

**Clarification:** Bats tend to drop down from their roosts and flap their wings before they lift off in flight. Having one accidentally swoop down into your personal space might be a hair-raising experience but a bat will not nest in your hair.

**Myth: Bats suck human blood.**

**Clarification:** Vampire bats do exist. They are small bats that primarily feed on the blood of cattle in Central and South America by making a tiny incision and then lapping, not sucking, the blood. Occasionally, humans sleeping outdoors or in huts without windows have been bitten. Unlike the bats of fiction, the little vampire bat prefers the big toe rather than a throat because the blood flow is better there!

**Myth: All bats have rabies.**

**Clarification:** Like any mammal, a bat can contract and carry rabies. According to a recent Centers for Disease Control study, most of the bats of the United States are not rabid. That said, as with any wild animal, don't touch or handle bats because it's not always evident that an animal has rabies just by looking at it. However, in the unlikely event that you are ever scratched or bitten by a bat, report the incident to a doctor ASAP.

KIDS! CLIP AND KEEP YOUR KIDS' KORNER COLUMNS IN A THREE-RING BINDER AND YOU'LL HAVE A NOTEBOOK CHOCK FULL OF FUN IDEAS AND ACTIVITIES FOR THE FUTURE!



**It's never too soon to learn about bats!**

## Bat Appreciation Month

In October, bats show up on everything from cupcakes to lawn ornaments as symbols of Halloween creepiness.

Because they are receiving lots of unflattering attention during this month, it's the perfect time to put in a good word for nature's furry fliers. With a little creativity, some of the spookiness of bats can be put to rest while still enjoying Halloween fun.

Share these suggestions with all those around you.

- Make several *message-from-a-bat* decorations to hang in your window. Easy origami instructions here: [agirlandaglugun.com/2014/10/origami-bats.html](http://agirlandaglugun.com/2014/10/origami-bats.html).
- Create and hand out whimsical bat bookmarks featuring *bat power* facts.
- Learn some bat jokes.
- Take time to discover more about bats through books and websites such as [kids.nationalgeographic.com](http://kids.nationalgeographic.com).



Why are vampire bats like false teeth? They come out at night



## Creepy or Cool?

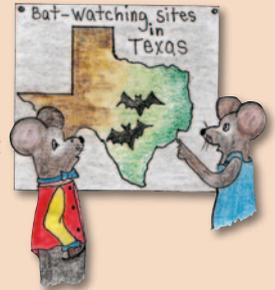
Not everyone will be convinced that bats are more fascinating than frightening. For some, fear and myths will still outweigh the facts.

However, no matter where you stand on the creepy/cool bat spectrum, don't forget the valuable roles bats play in the world's ecosystems. Remember ... they are crop pollinators, seed dispersal agents and natural pest controllers. They deserve to be valued and respected and maybe even given "super-hero" status ... despite the fact that they aren't cute and cuddly! ■



## CALLING ALL SUPER SLEUTHS:

Hay Seed and City Slicker heard that Texas is the "battiest" state in the whole country. Not only is it home to the most species of bats found in the U.S., it has the largest bat colony in the whole world! In a cave, less than 20 miles from San Antonio, 15 million bats come to roost.



Texas can also boast of another huge bat colony site that is conveniently located in downtown Austin. It is the largest urban colony of bats in North America. Every evening from mid-March to early November, 1.5 million bats emerge from their perches, creating a spectacular and unusual tourist attraction.

**For a chance to win \$25**, do some research and answer the following:

- What is the name of the Texas cave holding the world's largest bat colony?
- What is the name of the site where the largest urban bat colony in North America roosts?
- Can you find a little napping bat in this magazine and give the page number?
- Do you think bats are creepy or cool? Tell why.

Enter online at [co-opliving.com](http://co-opliving.com) or send answers with your name, address and phone number to:

**Cooperative Living Super Sleuth**  
P.O. Box 2340  
Glen Allen, VA 23058-2340

## OCTOBER ISSUE SUPER SLEUTH

The August 2019 KIDS' KORNER encouraged young readers to write a letter to themselves to read in the future. For a chance to win a \$25 Amazon gift card, kids were asked to locate the page number of the inkwell and pen in the magazine; to cite the day of National Ballpoint Pen Day; to explain the significance of National Ballpoint Pen Day; and to name their favorite writing tool and why they like it.

The answers were:

- Page 29
- June 10, 1943
- The day is special because it commemorates the day the ballpoint pen was patented.
- My favorite writing tool is the invisible ink pen. It's my favorite because you can write secrets, and no one can see them unless they use a black light.



Our winner is Austin Veade of Stafford, Virginia.

**Congratulations, Austin!**