

How can we help bats?

Lesson

8

What we will learn this week:

- Some small things you can do or say to help people who are scared or negative about bats
- Some bigger things you can do to make the environment better for bats (and people)




Hi everyone, you have heard about the threats that bats face. It's time to find out how to help bats, remember every small action can add up to something bigger, so don't ever think there's nothing you can do. Here are my top tips on being an ambassador for bats

- Dispel the myths
- Speak up for bats
- Do something positive

If you see this symbol:



you may need help from an adult.



Don't forget, the pencil symbol means it's your turn to do an activity!

You will need :

- ✓ A **pencil**
- ✓ **Some paper**



1

Dispel the myths

Lots of humans are scared of bats simply because they have heard or read things about bats that are quite untrue or vastly exaggerated! My friends are here to bust those myths.

Are all bats
vampires ?



Don't be daft! There are over 1400 species (type) of bat in the world and only three of these are vampires. They usually drink a little bit of blood from the legs of birds, rarely from humans. Vampire bats live in central and south America, NONE of them live in southern Africa! BUT humans are so obsessed with vampires they gave many bats names like False vampire (you should hear Avnaya rant!) Did you know one of the largest bats in the world has the scientific name *Pteropus vampyrus* (pronounced Terropus so it sounds like a very scary cat!). Guess what... *Pteropus vampyrus* is a FRUIT BAT!!!!!!

Hi, I'm one of the bats scientists classified as a "false vampire". I don't know why they called me that! It would have been just as incorrect to call me a "false fruit bat". I eat insects, I don't drink blood or chomp through fruit.



Bats get tangled in human hair!



Why would a bat want to tangle itself up in human hair?! It just does not make sense. I can pinpoint a tiny insect with my echolocation calls and catch it in mid-air, so I'm NOT going to fly into someone's head.



DID YOU KNOW?

So where does the idea come from? One possibility is that on a still night the warmth from a person's body rises up above them and can attract a small cloud of insects above their head. If hungry insectivorous bats fly in to catch the insects it might look as if they are flying close to a person's head. Bats are sometimes seen flying under and around the legs of cattle when the cattle get up or move through long grass. The cattle disturb the insects and the bats fly in for a yummy snack. They really aren't trying to get tangled up in the cattle's fur!

Bats are blind!

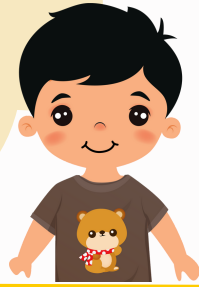


Oh NO we aren't! Look at my beautiful BIG eyes. I need these to see in the dark. I don't echolocate so I have to use my eyesight to find my way around (my sense of smell also helps to guide me to the ripest fruit).

I'm NOT blind but when it's dark I use **echolocation** to find my way around and to hunt insects. I can see with my eyes but I don't see bright colours, mostly I see black, white and shades of grey.



Bats are bad luck!
Bats are evil!



Oh dear, some humans are so superstitious but thankfully not all. Did you know that the Chinese word for bat sounds like "Fu" and the Chinese word for happiness also sounds like "Fu"? Five bats often feature in designs on silks and pottery to represent the five greatest blessings a person can have:



Good health, wealth, a long life, a clear conscience and at the end of a long, happy, healthy life the last blessing is a peaceful or natural death.

This is a wedding chair from china. It was considered good luck for the bride and groom to sit side by side on it, note the bat across the top of the chair back



If you have any Chinese items in your house (or visit a museum with a Chinese section) look out for the stylized bats.

Bats are ugly!



Beauty is in the eye of the beholder! Many of us bats have faces that look strange to humans, but our unusual features are perfectly designed for our life style.

My wrinkled lips remind humans of a pug dog, perhaps my free tail reminds them of a dog too. (FUN FACT Mops is the german word for a pug.)



Well I think I'm rather beautiful with my colourful fur and wings.



Bats are full of viruses and germs!



Don't panic! If you aren't handling bats or eating bats you aren't likely to ever catch a disease from them. It's true that bats can live with viruses that do not make them ill; this is because bats and viruses have lived together for hundreds of thousands of years. Studying bats can help scientists work out how the bats stay healthy and this can help humans deal with viruses in the future.

Bats are messy pests!



Well I realise that bat "splat" (Poo) can be sticky, smelly and messy but that is the way we spread seeds to help new forests grow. When we are able to live in big forests it isn't a problem to humans, but with more and more forests being cut down, we are forced to live in smaller areas, closer to people or even in their gardens. We would rather live in the big forests but that gets less and less possible the more people cut down trees.

A pest! Me! What a cheek, don't you know that I eat lots of insects that are pests to crops. I'm a natural insecticide, helping farmers by eating pests, and for free!"



MMMM yummy insects!



Activity 1: True or false

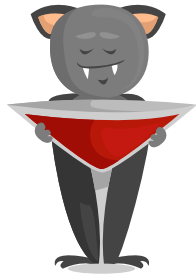
Which of these statements about bats are true and which are false?

Put a tick in the right box!



TRUE

FALSE



All bats suck blood

Bats help farmers out by eating lots and lots of insects



Bats are blind



Bats get caught in your hair

Bats are scary

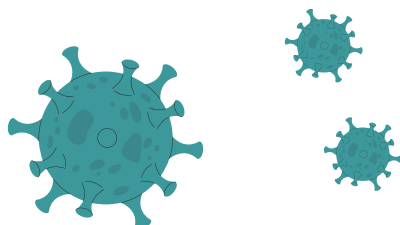


Bat poo is cool because it helps plants to pollinate by spreading their seeds



Bats are beautiful

Bats can help scientists to uncover secrets to help humans fight future viruses



2

Speak up for bats



Here are some ideas to help you speak up for bats.



- Find out more about your local bats – what species are in your area? Have you seen bats flying or roosting or feeding in a tree? The more you know the better you can look after bats.
- If someone says they are scared of bats tell them why you are interested in bats, tell them about some of the ways bats help us, invite them to a game of “race to roost” so they associate bats with having fun.
- Share what you’ve learnt from these lessons with your friends and family, you could even give a talk at school!

3

Do something positive



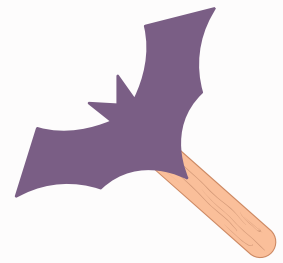
Here are some ideas of things you can do to help bats. Some of these ideas you can do at home, other ideas are best done as part of a group or school.

- Make a poster to show some of the ways bats help us. Explain your poster to your class or group.

Bats are great!



- Write a story, a song or shadow puppet play that has a positive message about bats.

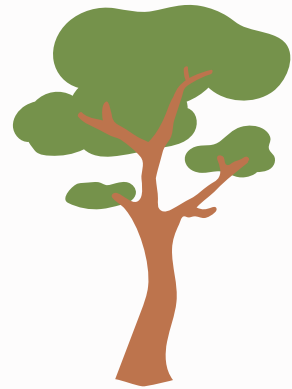


- Make a wildlife garden – this makes the environment more beautiful and interesting for both people and wildlife (including bats).



- Plant (native) trees - Trees and bats really go together well. Trees help to;

- *Create sheltered places for bats to feed in (sheltered from the weather and predators).*
- *Create flight paths and land marks for bats to navigate by.*
- *Provide places for bats to roost - old trees have holes and nooks and crannies that bats can use.*
- *Attract insects to them (great for insectivorous bats).*
- *Provide nectar, pollen and fruit for bats that feed on these.*



- Make a bat box - Putting up bat boxes offers bats extra places to roost in, they are particularly helpful in areas that have good feeding for bats but lack natural roosts for example near woodland where the trees are still too young to have rot holes in them.





Activity 2: What have you learnt ?

This is the last lesson in our education series, so hopefully by now you have learnt lots and lots about bats, as well as got to know some of the amazing bat species that are found in southern Africa. How much do you remember?



Write down ten things you have learnt during these lessons, and share them with your friends or family. Here are some things you might want to include:

- Some bat species use echolocation to find their way around.
- A bat's wings has the same bones as those in a human hand – but their fingers are really really long!
- Bats come in lots of different shapes and sizes, they are found in different places and eat different things.
- Some bats eat insects, others fruit, pollen or nectar (amongst other things).
- Bats are mammals just like humans.
- Bats are the only mammals that can fly.
- Bats face lots of threats – when trees are taken down, and woodlands lost this affects where bats can live.
- Bats need friends – we can all stand up for bats and help them to thrive.

What are your favourite facts?

Is it about me?



Or me?



Or me?



Or me?



Or me?

Time to say goodbye!



OK guys! That was our last lesson together! My friends and I hope you have learnt a lot over our weeks together, and that you will do your best to spread all your new knowledge about bats to everyone around you! We sure do need your help!



Goodbye!

