

FIVE FALSE MYTHS ABOUT BATS...AND ONE THAT'S ACTUALLY TRUE

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How much do you really know about bats?

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By **Jordan Bowman**

For centuries, bats have held a mythical fascination throughout the world. And let's face it: due to the characteristics of bats — leathery wings, nocturnal lifestyle, and (for some species) thirst for blood — a lot of those myths fall unfairly on the side of "yikes!" instead of "aww!" Today we'll sift through five of the most common myths, separate fact from fiction...and highlight one myth that's actually true.

Myth 1: Bats are blind



LESSER LONG-NOSED BAT, BRUCE D. TAUBERT

FALSE

One of the most common-yet-easily-disproven myths on this list, bats' eyes are far from blind. While they see the world very differently from how we humans do, bat eyes work in tandem with their other senses to make them super effective at finding their favorite snacks. [Learn more in our in-depth article](#) that explains how some bats might even see better than you do!

Myth 2: Bats commonly get tangled in human hair

FALSE

Have you ever been on an evening walk when a bat dove toward your head and came within inches of your hair and then had nightmares about it for a week? You're not the only one (though maybe that last part was just me) — the bat had likely zeroed in on a bug circling your head. While it's not *impossible*, the chances of a bat getting caught in your locks are very low. Rather than freaking out, you could thank the bat for preventing yet another mosquito bite!



SPECTACLED FLYING FOX (PTEROPUS CONSPICILLATUS). MARTIN WILLIS.JPG

Myth 3: All bats carry rabies

FALSE

[A 2011 University of Calgary study](#) found that *less than one percent of bats carry rabies*. However, that does not mean that bats (like most mammals) do not carry a risk of transmitting this dangerous disease. NEVER touch a bat with your bare hands. If you find a bat on the ground or out during the daytime, it could be sick or injured. If you encounter a bat in a building or on the ground, we suggest contacting a [local rehabber](#).

Myth 4: Bats have a taste for human blood

FALSE

Blame this myth on *Dracula* and similar stories. Out of the 1,400-plus bat species, only *three* species of [vampire bats](#) feed on blood. *Rarely* do these bats feed on human blood, instead opting for livestock like cows and pigs, or on wild mammals and birds. Humans who are bitten typically sleep in areas without barriers to keep out bats. Lastly, vampire bats don't *suck* blood at all — instead, they make a small cut with their teeth and then lick up the blood.

Fun fact: vampire bat saliva contains an anticoagulant — called "Draculin" — to keep the blood flowing, which scientists are studying as a potential treatment for blood clots.



COMMON VAMPIRE BAT, CHARLES M. FRANCIS

Myth 5: Bats are really just flying mice



FALSE VAMPIRE BAT (MEGADERMA LYRA). STEPHEN DALTON

FALSE

Not even close. Bats belong to a completely different order of animal (chiroptera) than mice or rats (rodentia). Just because both bats and mice have big ears and star in beloved animated features doesn't mean they're related.

Myth 6: Without bats there would be no tequila

TRUE

Agave, the plant used as the base for tequila, is primarily pollinated by three species of bats: the [Mexican long-nosed bat](#), the [lesser long-nosed bat](#), and the [Mexican long-tongued bat](#). So, the next time you order a margarita, make sure you raise a glass to these essential pollinators!

Not-so-fun fact: the populations of these three bat species have been severely harmed by unsustainable agave harvesting practices. [Your support](#) helps us forward agave restoration projects to protect these bat species from extinction.



MEXICAN LONG-NOSED BAT. HORIZONLINE PICTURES

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