

FIVE WAYS BATS ARE JUST LIKE BATMAN

Swift. Agile. Clever. Talented. Mysterious. Bats really are the misunderstood superheroes of the night!

1. They are masters of stealth

Bats can navigate in total darkness, easily avoiding a thin tree branch or catching an insect as small as a fruit fly. But forget the fancy gadgets: these dark knights simply use sound to “see”!

As they fly, bats make short, high-pitched calls. The calls bounce off objects around them, producing echoes. The echoes provide bats with all sorts of information about an object’s size, shape and distance. This special “power” is called echolocation.

This pallid bat has caught a long-horned grasshopper.

Hoary bat

Townsend's big-eared bat



2. They clean up the streets

Like winged crime fighters, bats help protect crops and gardens from damaging insects.

And bats eat a lot of insects. Some bats, like the little brown bat found here in B.C., can eat their own body weight in bugs in a single night. Holy appetite, Batman!

That amounts to thousands of insects.

3. They adopt orphans

The females of many bat species live together in colonies. Some colonies number in the thousands – or even the millions!

Living in such close quarters requires cooperation. So, just as Bruce Wayne took Dick Grayson under his wing, some females look out for each other’s pups. They nurse, warm and guard them like their own.



4. They have a sense of justice

Just two nights without food, and female vampire bats can starve to death. So, when one bat comes back from an unsuccessful hunt, another bat shares her meal – by throwing up blood for her friend. Gross but generous!



Bats who benefit return the favour sometime in the future. But bats who cheat – accept a blood donation without giving back – eventually find themselves going hungry. No one likes a cheater!



5. They have an archenemy

This villain – known as white-nose syndrome – is **no joke**. At least six million bats have died since the deadly disease was introduced from Europe to eastern North America in 2006.

White-nose syndrome is caused by a fungus. The fungus, which thrives in the cold, attacks bats while they are hibernating. The bats wake up in the middle of winter and fly out of their caves, where they starve and freeze to death.

The disease poses quite the riddle for scientists: not all bats are affected by the fatal fungus. That means these healthy bats and their habitats need protection!



BATS IN OUR BACKYARD

B.C. has the greatest diversity of bats in Canada: 16 out of the country's 19 bat species live here. The most common species people encounter are the little brown bat and the big brown bat.



SAVE OUR SUPERHEROES!

Sadly, bats are in trouble. From habitat loss to pesticides, diseases to plain old human prejudice, bats face many challenges. But you can help!

Put up a bat house. Bat houses can support hundreds of bats, giving them a safe place to roost (rest) during the day. Find out more at bcbats.ca.

Join the Bat Watch. With so many threats facing bats, it is important to know whether bat populations are going up or down. Take part in a bat count at sunset. Visit bcbats.ca to learn more.

Celebrate National Bat Week. Bats are among the most misunderstood animals in the world. During National Bat Week, October 24-31, tell friends and family about the many reasons we have to thank and celebrate bats! Discover what other kids are doing at batweek.org.