

Bats...Helpful or Harmful?

By Erin Horner

When most people think about a bat, the image of a vampire with sharp teeth comes to mind. In reality, there are nearly 1,000 different kinds of bats-and very few like to suck blood! Thanks to many scary movies, bats have gotten a bad rap. These mammals are actually very helpful -- not harmful -- to humans.

Many bats eat fruit. When a bat nibbles on a piece of fruit, its seed will fall to the ground. Soon, some of these fallen seeds will sprout. Then new plants begin to grow. Other fruit bats use their tongues to drink pollen. As they drink, the pollen from one type of flower sticks to their tongues. Then they fly to another flower. When they stick out their tongues to drink once again, some of the old pollen rubs off. This helps the new flower make seeds. These new seeds then grow into new plants. All of these new plants are very helpful for humans.

Other bats help us by eating insects. Most of the bugs that bats like to eat are considered pests. They are bugs that sting. They are also bugs that can harm crops or spread illnesses. Some bats can eat as many as 600 bugs in one hour! By ridding our areas of pesky bugs, these bats help to keep us safe and sane! Most people who are afraid of bats do not know how helpful these animals can be. They have either heard too many myths or watched too many movies. So the next time you hear someone talk about a scary bat movie, remind them that *real* bats are more like Batman than Dracula. While bats might not be *superheroes* they are *super helpers*!



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Questions

1. What do most bats eat?

_____ 2. The author probably wrote this story to _____.

- A. Demonstrate how to catch a bat
- B. Persuade you to think of bats as helpful animals
- C. Describe the life cycle of a bat
- D. Inform you about scary movies

Name _____



Date _____

_____ 3. Why does the author think that most people are afraid of bats?

- A. Because bats steal fruit
- B. Because all bats drink blood
- C. Because there are lots of scary movies about bats
- D. Because bats are mean

_____ 4. Which of the following is true about bats?

- A. Most do not drink blood.
- B. Many eat fruit and insects.
- C. There are many different kinds.
- D. All of the above