

October is National Bat Appreciation Month!!

Posted by [Naomi Hurley](#) On 10/01/2017

Hollywood, MD—Not only is October home to the spookiest and arguably most eccentric holiday, but it is also the host of a national appreciation for that same holiday's mascot—the bat! Halloween and bats go hand in hand (or hand in wing, you could say), but bats contribute far more to our world and ecosystem besides just being featured on cute and creepy decor.

Bats are the only mammals that have the true capability of flying, and they can do so at rates up to 60 mph. There are over 1,000 species of bats worldwide, 10 of which inhabit Maryland. Bats have some of the highest levels of diversity, making up 25 percent of all mammal species on Earth! The lifespan of a bat can reach up to 30 years, and bats typically only reproduce once per year. A baby bat is called a "pup," and mothers have the ability to find their pups among millions of others based on their voices and scents. Pups usually weigh about a quarter of the mother's weight at birth, which is the equivalent of a human giving birth to a 30-pound baby.

As far as affecting the ecosystem, most species of bats eat insects. A single bat can eat 1,200 mosquitoes in just one hour—easily consuming their entire body weight in a night. Fruit-eating bats pollinate over 500 species of plants, including bananas, mangoes, and even cocoa. So, when you're eating Halloween candy at the end of the month, make sure to thank a bat for the chocolate! While there is a negative connotation and endless myths circulating around the infamous vampire bat, only three species of blood-sucking bats exist, none of which inhabit the United States.

Bats are nocturnal creatures, and will often sleep in trees, caves, or other dark corridors during the day. Many bats find their food using echolocation, emitting sounds that bounce off of objects and reverberate back to them. These echoes allow bats to decipher not only how far away an object is, but also its size, speed, and even texture.

Like many wild animals, bats can carry rabies. However, the chance of being bitten and infected by a bat with rabies is extremely low. In fact, a bee sting is much more dangerous to humans than a bat bite. Bats, like most other animals we may encounter, are scared of humans, and will not try to attack people. That being said, just like raccoons and possums, people should not approach bats.

Unfortunately, bat species are in decline. To help deter deterioration of population, you can build a [bat house in your backyard](#) to give them shelter. If you see an injured bat, call the Maryland Department of Natural Resources at 1-877-620-8540, or visit their [web site](#) which details several organizations to contact. Bats are misunderstood, and should be appreciated not only for the month of October, but for the rest of the year as well.

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