My Drift

Title: Bats
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Date: 10 Apr 2021
Article Number: 360-2021-9

In December 2019, a new coronavirus was discovered in Wuhan, China. The virus, named SARS-CoV-2, causes coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19). The virus quickly spread to multiple countries. By March 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared COVID-19 a global pandemic.

Since then, daily life has changed for people around the world. Practices such as mask wearing, social distancing, and working from home have become the norm.

Chinese Girl Eating Bat Soup

As a result, many people want to know where the virus came from, and some people like me have looked for answers online. However, there are several myths circulating around like the popular rumor saying this new coronavirus originated from people eating "Bat Soup" in China. This is false. Bat soup consumption didn't cause the COVID-19 pandemic. The exact source of the virus is still unknown but as usual I have a few theories.

Theory #1

This Coronavirus existed in animals (mostly bats) only, for nobody knows how long, but one day, at an animal "wet" market in Wuhan China, in December 2019, it mutated and made the jump from animal to humans. At first, only animals could give it to a person. But here is the scary part - in just TWO WEEKS it mutated again and gained the ability to jump from human to human.

Guess What? Wuhan Wet Markets are Open again selling Bats, Rats, Dogs, and other Exotic Animal Meats

Theory #2

Wuhan Institute of Virology

The Wuhan Institute of Virology is the largest biological lab in Asia. It is China's only Biosafety Level-4 (BSL-4) lab. This means it is the only facility in China permitted to handle the most dangerous known pathogens, including the Ebola and Lassa viruses. This lab has done extensive research and testing with the novel coronavirus. The Wuhan Institute of Virology has also been linked to Beijing's covert bio-weapons program.

A lot of people think that a lack in security resulted in a lab employee unknowingly catching the coronavirus disease and spreading to it to the local population in Wuhan.

Theory #3

The Chinese government intentionally spread the coronavirus by sending infected people all around the world on international flights. This was part of their covert bio-weapons program to gain military superiority over the United States. It is also possible that China had a vaccine before turning the virus loose on the rest of the world. Selected government officials and the military received the initial vaccine doses.

I like theory #2 the best. What is your pick, or do you have a better theory?

The bottom line here is regardless of how this coronavirus got started, it probably originated in bats. Yes, bats carry many diseases, but they have been on this earth for 50 million years and they don't cause Pandemics unless humans somehow get involved. Don't blame the bats!

However, there are many people around the world who do blame the bats and they are killing them in records numbers. These same idiots also blame the Chinese people and all Asians. HATE is at an all-time high as I write this article.

It is time we learned more about this unique and amazing mammal.

Specie Information

Bats are mammals belonging to the order Chiroptera, a name of Greek origin meaning "hand-wing."

Bats are divided into two main types: megabats and microbats. Megabats include flying foxes and Old-World fruit bats. They tend to be larger than microbats although some microbats are actually larger than the smaller megabats.

Bat sizes range from the smallest Kitti's Hog-Nosed bat, with a body length of 1.2 inches, a wingspan of 5.9 inches, and a weight of .08 ounces to the largest bat, the Golden-Crowned Flying Fox with a wingspan up to 5 feet 7 inches and a weight up to 4 pounds.

Kitti's Hog-Nosed Bat

Giant Golden-Crowned Flying Fox

With over 1,300 total species, they are the second largest order of mammals (behind rodents). There are 47 species found in the United States. The state with the most bat species is Arizona with 28 species. Texas has the most bats. Bracken Cave has the world's largest bat colony. Located near San Antonio, Texas, this colony has up to 20 million Mexican Free-tailed Bats.

Bracken Cave during the Day

Bracken Cave at Night

Mexican Free-tailed Bat

The Big Brown Bat, the Little Brown Bat, the Pallid Bat, the Brazilian Free-tailed Bat, Mexican Free-tailed Bat, and the Northern Long-eared Bat are the most common species of bats in North America.

Big Brown Bat

Pallid Bat

Brazilian Free-Tailed Bat

All 50 U.S. states have bats. Even Alaska has seven known species of bats. The Little Brown Bat is the only one that can survive in the extreme cold weather in central and north Alaska. Most of the bats live near the ocean or southern Alaska near Anchorage.

The Little Brown Bat

Hawaiian Hoary Bat

Fast Fact: The state land mammal of Hawai‘i is the Hawaiian Hoary Bat. This bat is found on all of the major Hawaiian Islands.

The country with the most bat species is Indonesia with 219. The Hoary Bat is the most widespread of all bats, found throughout most of the world.

The Hoary Bat

Fast Fact: Bats make up about 20% of the total number of mammals on earth.

Fast Fact: Bats are the only mammal that can really fly! There are some squirrels and other animals that can glide a few yards.

Fast Fact: The Brazilian Free-tailed Bat has achieved speeds of up to 100 miles per hour in level flight, which makes it faster than any bird.

Habitat

Bats live almost everywhere, except for some islands, and the Arctic and Antarctica. They prefer warmer areas that are closer to the equator, and they can be found in rain forests, mountains, farmland, woods, and cities.

Bats roost in trees, caves, mines, and barns — any place that provides shelter from the weather, protection from predators and seclusion for rearing their young. They generally live together in groups called colonies, which can contain anywhere from 100 to several thousand individuals.

As nocturnal creatures, bats sleep during the day and are active at night. Some may fly more than 30 miles in order to find food during their nightly journeys. In the day, they sleep upside down, holding on to their roost with their sharp claws.

Bat Sleeping Upside Down

Why do bats hang upside down when they sleep? Unlike birds, bats cannot launch their bodies into the air from the ground or a tree limb because their wings don't produce enough lift to take off like a helicopter. If sleeping bats need to escape quickly, hanging upside-down means they are already in the perfect position to spread their wings and fly away.

You have probably heard the expression, "He is as blind as a bat!" Well, bats are not blind. Their vision is not great, but they have small eyes with very sensitive vision which helps them see in conditions we might consider pitch black. This along with their exceptional hearing allow bats to find food and to fly at high speeds without running into things.

Where do bats go in the winter? These furry mammals don't have a lot of fat to keep them warm, and instead have two strategies for weathering the cold winters. Some bats migrate to warmer areas, while most go into a short-term form of hibernation called torpor. During torpor, a bat reduces its metabolic rate, lowers its body temperature, and slows its breathing and heart rates. Torpor can last for just a few hours to save energy during a cold day, or they can remain in torpor for up to a month while hibernating over winter.

Bats during Torpor (Hibernation) in a Cave

Diet

Most bats eat flowers, small insects, fruits, nectar, pollen, and leaves, though it depends on the type of bat. Megabats usually eat fruits, and microbats generally eat insects.

Some bats have relatively large appetites, such as the Malayan flying fox, which eats about half its body weight every day. But the vampire bat far exceeds even that, eating twice its weight in one day. Bats can eat fast, too — the brown bat can eat up to 1,000 small insects in just one hour.

Bats use echolocation to "see" insects and other objects in the dark. They make high-frequency sounds then analyze the location of objects around them by perceiving how the sound bounces off the object. Echolocation allows the bats to tell how big and how far away an object is.

Fast Fact: About 70% of the world's bats — are insect eaters. Bats consume both aerial and ground-dwelling insects.

Not all bats eat insects. For example, some bats will squeeze fruits into their mouths and drink the juices. Vampire bats, though, like a different kind of

juice. As their name suggests, they drink blood, mainly from livestock such as cattle and horses, as well as deer, wild pigs, and even humans which they find using specialized heat-detecting sensors near their noses. And they don't actually suck the blood like the legends suggest. Rather, they make a V-shaped cut and then lick up the blood.

An anticoagulant in Vampire Bat saliva, called Draculin, is so effective at thinning blood that it's being considered for use in patients with stroke or heart disease.

Vampire bats are found in warm climates in both arid and humid regions of Southwest Texas, Mexico, Central America, and South America.

Tip: Don’t get drunk and pass out where there are Vampire bats. They are not fussy where they get their next meal and have been known to feed on humans. These bats drink their victim's blood for about 30 minutes.

Mating habits

Bats exhibit unique mating behaviors not seen in other animals. Male and female bats meet at hibernation sites, called hibernacula, where they breed.

Bats 'swarm' around in huge numbers, chasing each other and performing spectacular aerobatics. It's not clear how the bats choose their mates, but it seems like females seek out the most agile males. During the swarming event, breeding pairs will go off to secluded spots in the cave to mate in private.

Mating occurs in the late summer and early autumn, and the females store the males' sperm until the next spring. A pregnant female will carry her young for

a gestation period of 40 days to six months. Then, she will give birth to one baby, called a pup. The pup will weigh about one-fourth as much as its mother at birth. Young bats drink milk from their mothers to survive, like other mammals.

The mothers and pups stay in groups separate from the males. Newborn bats wings are too small to be used for flight, so they rely on the milk from their mothers. When they are a few weeks old, pups are expected to fly and hunt on their own. It is up to them to find and catch their prey, along with satisfying their thirst. Young bats become independent at the age of six to eight weeks.

Mother Bat and Pup

Fast Fact: Bats live much longer than other mammals of similar size. They have a wide range of life spans from 10 to 12 years for some species to over 30 years for other species.

Vital Ecosystem Services

Globally, bats provide vital ecosystem services in the form of insect pest consumption, plant pollination, and seed dispersal, making them essential to the health of global ecosystems.

Agave Field in Mexico

Fast Fact: Tequila is produced from agave plants in Mexico that rely on bats as their primary pollinators. Just think, without the bats there would be no margaritas.

Fast Fact: Some areas on earth could be overrun with insects (including mosquitoes) if not for the bats gobbling up millions of them every night.

It is a Dangerous Time for Bats

Today, bats are under unprecedented threat from widespread habitat destruction, hunting, accelerated climate change, invasive species, diseases, and other stresses. Without concerted international action, their populations will continue to fall, driving many species to extinction. The Red List from the International Union for Conservation of Nature identifies more than 280 species as endangered, vulnerable or "near threatened."

Bats have few non-human predators, though raccoons, skunks, weasels, martens, cats, snakes, hawks, and owls occasionally take a few. Humans pose the biggest danger to bat populations. Some people who fear bats will go out of their way to kill them.

Yes, bats carry significantly more viruses than any other mammal species on the planet but getting rid of bats is not the way to avoid disease. In fact, research has shown that killing bats doesn't reduce disease transmission but instead increases the number of susceptible bats and enhance disease transmission.

We humans would be just fine if we just left the bats alone!

Fast Fact: I know one thing for sure – you will never catch me eating Bat Soup!

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