



We share the world with an almost-magical medley of living things. And even as we often threaten the biodiversity of some regions, new species of plants and animals, including bats, are still being discovered. Scientists now count a total of 1,232 species of bats.

That number “more than one-fifth of all the world's mammal species” comes from Nancy Simmons, the American Museum of Natural History's Mammalogy Curator-in-Charge and professor at the museum's Richard Gilder Graduate School. In 2003, Simmons raised the bat-species total to 1,105 “from 925 since 1993 (see BATS, Spring 2003). She confirmed the count in her chapter on bats for the 2005 third edition of *Mammal Species of the World*.

Simmons and her colleague Andrea Wetterer reported the latest bat count at the 15th International Bat Research Conference in Prague, Czech Republic, last August.

"New taxa are being recognized all over the world," she says. Most new species are found in the tropics of South America, Southeast Asia and Africa. Many are island dwellers with restricted geographic ranges.

Roughly two out of three new species are recognized in studies that include DNA analyses. These bats, Simmons said, usually have been recognized "by someone at some point as distinct, but they got lumped into other taxa" until they were determined to be genetically distinct species. The rest of the new species are mostly discoveries from new explorations in areas rarely sampled by scientists.

Who knows what the future will bring?

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