

## **The conservation of bats and their habitats helps create a healthier, safer world**

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*One of the lessons of the pandemic is that disturbances to wildlife and destruction of natural habitats make it more likely for viruses to spill over into humans.*

**Zoonotic diseases:** Diseases spread between animals and people that are caused by harmful germs like viruses, bacterial, parasites, and fungi.<sup>1</sup>

- Scientists estimate that 6 out of every 10 known infectious diseases in people come from animals.
- Humans come into contact with animals in many places, so best practices to reduce disease transmission of any sort include washing hands thoroughly, avoiding insect bites and avoiding handling of wild animals.
- Zoonotic spillover is best controlled by merging public health, veterinary medicine, animal management and ecological approaches.<sup>2</sup>

While the exact chain of transmission that resulted in COVID-19 may never be established, we know that new pathogens are more likely to spill into human populations when nature is disrupted and disturbed.

- Most bats will never come into contact with humans and pose no risk of transmitting COVID-19.
- Wild animals naturally avoid contact with humans and should not be handled or disturbed.
- Although COVID-19 has been one of the most dramatic examples of a virus spilling over into humans, scientists discover new viruses every year as a result of human infringement on the natural world.
- Honoring natural biodiversity reduces the chance of pathological spillover.<sup>3</sup>

Destruction of habitats and exploitation of wildlife increase the risk of new pathogens jumping into the human population. We are a healthier and safer world when we conserve wildlife and natural habitats.

- Bats secrete more saliva, urine and feces, which contain viruses, when stressed out by human encroachment. Bat conservation serves to protect both bats and humans at once.<sup>4</sup>

***Bat conservation is part of the solution. When we protect bats, we stay safer, too.***

*Sources:*

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.cdc.gov/onehealth/basics/zoonotic-diseases.html>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5468692/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5468692/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://elifesciences.org/articles/48401>