

Bat conservation has never been more critical as COVID-19 impacts the lives of people worldwide.

Conservation of bats and their habitats helps create a healthier, safer world

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.

- 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.
- 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.
- Destruction of habitats and exploitation of wildlife increase the risk that new pathogens jump into the human population; therefore, we are a healthier and safer world when we conserve wildlife and natural habitats.
- Bat conservation is part of the solution. When we protect bats, we stay safer, too.

Bat conservation is important for the global community

Bat conservation has significant global importance; while food supplies and economies are strained as a result of the pandemic, bats continue to play a vital role in restoring our natural ecosystems and supporting human economies across the world.

- Bats provide key ecosystem services around the world that support ecological and economic integrity, including consumption of insect pests, pollination of plants, and seed dispersal.
- Around the world, bats consume agricultural insect pests, which helps farmers by reducing pesticide use and improving crop yields.
- In the United States, the economic benefit of bats eating agricultural insect pests is estimated to save American farmers billions of dollars each year.
- Globally, bats pollinate many different species of plants, including some plants with cultural and economic value to local communities, such as durian fruit in Asia and agave in Mexico.
- In tropical rainforests, bats disperse seeds of many tree species helping to maintain and restore forest health.

Researching bats provides significant value for scientific discovery

Research into bats and their special abilities to not get sick from many viruses could hold the key to the next breakthrough vaccine or treatment.

- Studying disease transmission from animals to humans, including identifying wildlife reservoirs for pathogens, increases our understanding and ability to predict and prevent zoonotic spillover events.
- The virology, immunology, and ecology of bats is of crucial importance to developing strategies to inform conservation and global human health outcomes.
- Biodiversity is like a library of solutions. Bats have a special ability to tolerate viruses such as viruses closely related to the one that causes COVID-19 (SARS-CoV-2) and the scientific research of this tolerance could help to develop new vaccines or treatments.
- Studying bat immunology can help us understand our own immune systems and ways to fight diseases.

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