

FACT SHEET BATS IN BHUTAN

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INTRODUCTION

Bats make up about 20% of all known mammal species, with over 1,400 species recorded globally (Dutheil et al., 2021). The recent publication reports 25 species of bats in Bhutan (Srinivasulu et al., 2025). Exact number of bat species in Bhutan remains unexplored as the information on many of the species is based on literature surveys. At present, information on diversity and distribution of seven families of bats is available for nine districts (Chhukha, Punakha, Wangdue, Dagana, Sarpang, Thimphu, Haa, Bumthang and Paro). The remaining 11 districts are unexplored. Currently, none of the bat species in Bhutan are protected under conservation laws.

FACTS WITH BATS

Type of animal: Mammal
Kingdom: Animalia
Class: Mammalia
Order: Chiroptera
Found where: everywhere except extreme cold regions

a) VESPERTILIONIDAE

- Commonly known as evening bats.
- Most diverse and widely distributed.

- Are insectivorous and characterized by relatively simple faces with no complex noses.

b) RHINOLOPHIDAE

- It's represented by one extant genus, *Rhinolophus*.
- Known as Horseshoe bats
- Has unique horseshoe-shaped noses.
- Are insectivorous.

c) MEGADERMATIDAE

- Called as false vampire bats.
- Relatively large with large ears and a prominent nose-leaf.
- Are carnivorous and diets include small bats, birds, reptiles and large insects.

d) HIPPOSIDERIDAE

- Known as the Old World leaf-nosed bats.
- Are aerial and gleaning insectivores.
- Occupy a wide range of ecological niches.

e) MOLOSSIDAE

- Known as free-tailed bats.
- Have long and pointed wings that help them fly at high altitudes above the ground.
- Are insectivorous.



f) MINIOPTERIDAE

- Consists a single genus, *Miniopterus*.
- Insectivorous and feeds on insects and spiders.
- Extra-long third finger makes the wing appear very long.

g) PTEROPODIDAE

- Called as fruit bats.
- Widely distributed.
- Mostly roost in trees, caves, rocks and abandoned houses.

8 FACTS ABOUT BATS

1. Some bats migrate to avoid winter. There is a difference in how different sexes migrate. In some species, only males migrate, in others only females migrate or both sexes migrate at different time.
2. Bats have few natural predators. Owls, hawks and snakes are some of the common natural predators of bats.
3. Bats play ecological roles as pollinators and seed dispersers contributing to forest regeneration. Without bats, say goodbye to bananas, avocados and mangoes.
4. Bats are natural pest regulators contributing to food security by feeding on agricultural pests. Night insects have the most to fear from bats.
5. Bats are the only flying mammal. While the flying squirrel can only glide for short distances, bats are true fliers.
6. The longest-living bat is 41 years old. In 2006 a tiny bat from Siberia set the world record at 41 years (Podlutsky, 2005).
7. Bats are known to be the natural reservoir of rabies and viruses.
8. In some cultures, bat meat is believed to cure various illnesses; however, these claims are not scientifically validated (Tackett et al., 2022).

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Contact:

Mr. Sangay Tshering
Lecturer, College of Natural Resources
Royal University of Bhutan
stshering.cnr@rub.edu.bt/ desangma06@gmail.com

DID YOU KNOW?

The world's smallest mammal is Kitt's hog-nosed bat or bumblebee bat weighing 2 grams. The largest is flying fox with wingspan up to 2 metres weighing 1.5 kilograms.

