

## How Bats Help Out



*Bats*

Have you ever seen a bat before? Bats are the only mammals that can fly. They are nocturnal animals. That means they are awake at night. They do their hunting and feeding after the sun has gone down.

Different kinds of bats eat different things. Some of them eat mostly insects. Others eat mostly fruit. And some eat pollen, nectar, and other parts of flowering plants. All of these kinds of bats are very important. Why?

Bats that eat insects help keep the number of bugs under control. Some of them eat mosquitoes, the nasty pests that feast on blood and spread disease. Because they eat so many bugs, they are great for farming. They eat the bugs that would otherwise eat farmers' crops!

Bats that eat fruit can help spread seeds. Inside a fruit are the seeds of the tree or plant that grew the fruit. When a bat eats the fruit, it does not digest

the seed. Instead, the seed leaves the bat as part of its waste. This can happen far away from the tree or plant where the bat first found the fruit. There, a new tree or plant can grow!

Bats that eat different parts of flowering plants are helpful pollinators. As they go from flower to flower, they move the plant's pollen to different flowers. This makes it possible for the plants to grow new seeds! More than 500 different kinds of plants need bats to pollinate their flowers. They include some kinds of cocoa, bananas, and mangos.

So if you see a bat, remember how much they help out!