

Families

WEAVE A TAPESTRY OF FAITH

STORY FOR ALL AGES



Why Bat Has No Friends

When the mammals on the ground went to war against the birds in the sky, Bat was nervous. He did not want to be stuck on the losing side. Bat thought the birds would win. There were far more birds. They could swoop down, peck at the mammals, then fly out of harm's way.

Bat flew up to the birds, flapped his wings and said, "Look! I have wings just like you. I wish to fight on your side." The birds twittered and squawked to each other. Finally, they agreed Bat could fight with them.

"What a wonderful choice I've made," Bat thought. "I will be on the winning side for sure."

But the mammals were hard to defeat.

They had sharp teeth and claws and were much larger than the birds. To make matters worse, the wind made it difficult for the birds to control their attacks. The mammals quickly won that battle. That night, Bat flew down to join them.

"What are you doing here?" roared Cougar, his paw raised to strike.

Bat opened his mouth wide to show his pointy teeth. "I am one of you!" he said, "See, I have teeth in my mouth, not a beak like a bird." The mammals agreed Bat belonged on their side.

The next day, the wind was gentle and the birds were able to organize. They pecked at the eyes of the mammals and



swooped into the sky, triumphant.

That evening, Bat snuck away from the mammals' camp and flew to join the birds. They complained that they had seen him on the mammals' side during the battle, but Bat flapped his wings and claimed to belong with the birds.

And so it went for many days. When the birds won a battle, Bat would flap his wings and go with them.

When the mammals won, Bat would bare his teeth and side with them.

Finally the animals were exhausted of fighting and called a truce. Then the mammals and the birds began to talk about Bat. "It doesn't seem fair. He switched sides whenever he wanted," squawked Crow.

"No, not fair at all," growled Bear. "Bat has wings but he did not stay with the birds."

"And he has teeth but did not always help the mammals," added Crow.

All the animals nodded and looked at Bat. "Because you could not choose your

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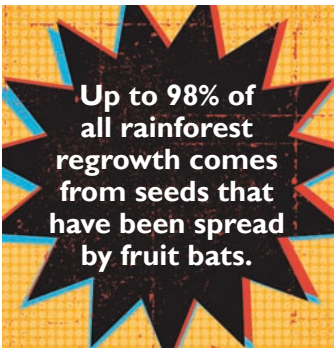


**All God's
Critters...Even
the Bat**

The Family pages are adapted from Tapestry of Faith lifespan faith development programs.

www.uua.org/tapestryoffaith

The United Nations designated **2011-12 the Year of the Bat** to call world attention to this nocturnal flying mammal found on every continent except Antarctica. **Many of the 1,200 known species of bats are endangered**, yet they are essential to the health of rainforests, beneficial to farmers and foresters, and uniquely delightful members of the interconnected web of life.



Sleeping in a cave



A bat house



Let It Be

Does someone in your family—maybe you—strongly dislike a particular common wild animal? Some people fear spiders, snakes, or mice. Some fear all kinds of flying insects.

Chances are the animal you dislike has an important place in our interconnected web of life. And, unless you are highly allergic (some people are allergic to bee stings), chances are the animal will not harm you if you take common sense safety precautions.

Could you try to become more comfortable with the animal you do not like?

- Visit the animal in captivity. A tarantula in a terrarium cannot hurt you. Take time to look at its individual features. See if you can find beauty there. If not, why not? Think about it.
- Find photographs of the animal in magazines and online. Put them together as a collage.
- Look up 10 facts about the animal. Is there anything you and it might have in common?

Calm your fears about the earth's stranger creatures.

- Believe that each and every one belongs. As Unitarian Universalists, we lift up our connection to nature, and we respect the natural world and all that is in it.

A Balancing Act

Owls, hawks, snakes, and raccoons are some animals that prey on bats—though the bat's speed and preference for remote, tucked-away nesting locations protect it from most natural predators. The bat's most troublesome predators are people. The most common way people kill bats is when we remove or destroy their safe habitats.

Bats look for cozy homes that are dark enough during the day for sleeping, and near a food source—for most, an insect population to hunt at night. Depending on location, bats might live in a hollow tree, a cave, the underside of a bridge, or the rafters of a barn.

Of course, you do not want bats living in your home. Call local wildlife


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Lil' Drac's Movie Debut

"If you see them close up, they're just kind of adorable," says Mary Bates, Ph.D., a science writer and student of bat echolocation, the sonar system many bats use to navigate and find food at night. "They're really cute little animals. They're really charming, once you get to see them and know them." To prove it, Mary posted on her blog page a video of Lil' Drac, an orphaned bat, raised at Bat World Sanctuary. 
<http://marybatessciencewriter.wordpress.com/2012/01/19/lets-check-in-on-lil-drac-our-favorite-baby-fruit-bat/>




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Up to
1,500,000
 (1.5 million)
Mexican free-tailed bats live under the Congress Avenue bridge in Austin, Texas.

Meet Cornelius
 When a pregnant Jamaican fruit bat was given away by a zoo that was closing, the future looked grim for her offspring. But Cornelius, her baby, had the good fortune to be born at Bat World Sanctuary, near Austin, Texas.

A Bat... Face!

One of the most fascinating aspects of bats is their facial anatomy. The great diversity of face types is due to differences in lifestyle and diet. A bat that feeds on nectar needs a long, thin face to insert into flowers. Insect-eating bats have shorter muzzles and stronger jaws, for chomping. Find pictures of different bats' faces, online. Print a few as large as you can, along with each bat's name, what it eats, and where it lives. Make bat masks, and take a good look at all the different kinds of bat faces! 

Bats evolved from earth-bound mammals as early as 52,500,000 (52.5 million) years ago.



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*Praise the sun, the moon, the stars,
 Praise the ant, the tree, the shining leaf.
 Praise every child large and small,
 Praise the one within us all.*


*Praise the swimmers, crawlers, and creepers...
 ...Praise those with fin, fur, and finger,
 Praise the winged ones, the tiny ones,
 and all the ones that live unseen.
 Praise brightest morning and darkest night.
 Praise the prickly and the unpopular.*

...PRAISE ALL. PRAISE ALL. PRAISE ALL.

From an affirmation by the Rev. Kathy Huff.

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control or check the websites of organizations like Bat World Sanctuary for help "excluding" bats from your home. If you have an outdoor space to build a bat house, bats can live there.

■ **Find out the role bats play in your local ecology.** ■ **Visit a conservation area and learn which animal species live there.** ■ **Ask rangers or other workers how you can help keep the balance in your ecosystem.** 

Teach Not Revulsion. Instead, Teach Wonder.

Have you ever had bats in your attic? Have you jumped when a bat flew swiftly past you in the night? Have you looked at a captive bat up close?

Although in most circumstances bats pose little danger to humans, we often react with fear or revulsion: “What is that thing!?” If you are looking at a bat, a spider, a squirmy worm creature, or a house mouse that way, perhaps you have a good reason. Maybe you had a negative experience with such an animal. Maybe you were warned—rationally or irrationally—at a young age.

But are you needlessly transmitting a negative attitude to your children? You may be inadvertently cultivating a mistrust or dislike of nature.

Children have an innate curiosity about all aspects of their environment. Their minds are wide open to all the world’s wonders. They come “pre-set” with deep understanding of their own relationship to the differences and connections that form the great web of life of which we are blessed to be a part.

Help children stay generous and appreciative—though always safe—in all their encounters with nature—even with the creatures that make you uncomfortable. 🦇

Children have an innate curiosity about their environment.

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friends during war, you will not have them during peace,” they said. “From this day forward, you will only fly at night when everyone else sleeps. You will have no friends among the mammals or the birds.” And that is why Bat has no friends. 🦇

FAMILIES: WEAVE A TAPESTRY OF FAITH

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FIND OUT MORE

- The Bats4Kids website explains colorfully and simply why bats are mammals, not birds, although they fly. Learn how echolocation works, and more. www.bats4kids.org
- Join online learning about bat species, their habitats, and their behaviors, and engage in a bat-related citizen science project in your local area to fight white-nose syndrome or promote bat conservation. Visit Bats Live: A Distance Learning Adventure. www.batslive.pwnet.org
- The Organization for Bat Conservation gives a safe, humane way to remove a bat colony safely from your home. Read about the benefits of a bat house in your backyard and see a variety of designs. www.batconservation.org
- See more bat house designs on the Bat Management website. www.batmanagement.com
- Find a simple, do-it-yourself version (materials: \$60) on the website of the PBS program “This Old House.” www.thisoldhouse.com
- The story, “Why Bat Has No Friends,” is an Aesop fable, adapted with permission from a version on the Kidzone website.

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