

## **A Spooky Season Staple—It's Bat Week!** ***Woodland Park Zoo Busts Misleading Myths About Bats***

SEATTLE—The days are growing darker across the Pacific Northwest and while the night can be creepy, one creature you shouldn't fear in the dark is bats! These misunderstood mammals play a significant role in keeping our environment healthy. In fact, there are numerous reasons to be a fan of bats; for instance, many of them eat mosquitoes and they're super cool.



Bat Week is an international celebration of these flying mammals that takes place October 24-31, and it's no mystery why the party ends on Halloween. Bats have long gotten a bad rap, being lumped in with bloodsucking vampires and depicted in movies bombarding folks who wander into a creepy cave. However, you may be surprised to learn that bats aren't particularly active during the spooky season. You're actually more likely to see them flying around during their peak activity months from June to August. And bats might forage in the air near you, but you're very unlikely to come into contact with one; their echolocation navigation not only helps them find insects but allows them to steer clear of obstacles!

During the summer when bats are busiest, Woodland Park Zoo's community science program, [Bat Activity Trends](#), ramps up engagement with locals about these winged creatures and how to spot them and document their activity. The program seeks to monitor bats in the region and empower participation in community science.

Over this past summer, the zoo offered 10 Bat Activity Trends trainings and meet-ups in seven different locations around the region and online. More than 230 people participated with the zoo to learn about bats and the BAT Program.

Overall, there were 176 observations logged by 43 observers. Observers were asked to count "bat passes," which is how many times they could see a bat pass by. Since it's impossible to distinguish and count individual bats when conducting these types of observations, "bat passes" is used as an indicator of bat activity. One interesting result from the observations was that some of the areas where high bat activity was observed are right in the city of Seattle. One hotspot was at Rainier Beach Urban Farm & Wetland.

Washington state is home to 14 bat species, 10 of which can be found statewide; four occur only in Eastern Washington. All Wash. bats are insectivores, meaning they feed on insects.

Bats are one of the most diverse groups of mammals in the animal kingdom and are essential to ecosystems as pollinators, seed dispensers and pest controllers. Their nocturnal nature makes them a bit more mysterious than other creatures, and they often don't get the credit they deserve.

Bat populations face many threats around the world, including habitat destruction, wind turbine disruption, climate change and light pollution. In addition, the emergence of white-nose syndrome (WNS) in the eastern U.S. in 2006 has killed millions of bats. WNS is a disease caused by a fungus, and it has since been found in Europe and Asia. WNS was first discovered in Washington state in 2016. Scientists are still determining the impacts on Washington bats and the Zoo's Bat Activity Trends program will help with that effort.

To learn more about bats and the efforts to save the species, visit [www.zoo.org/batconservation](http://www.zoo.org/batconservation).

#### HOW TO PROTECT BATS:

- *Share about bats:* One of the biggest steps you can take to help bats is to learn about them and share information with friends and family. Fear and misunderstanding can harm bats, so it's important to educate everyone about all the good things bats do for us.
- *Provide a home:* You can provide a habitat for bats in your yard by leaving hollow trees and snags standing or installing a bat house. Keep cats indoors and reduce your use of pesticides or other chemicals in your yard. Find out more about creating your own bat house [here](#).
- *Contribute to research:* Get involved with the [Bat Activity Trends](#) program and help us learn more about bats in Western Washington.

Woodland Park Zoo offers a safe, outdoor experience for all. Visit [www.zoo.org](http://www.zoo.org) for information. Zoo hours: 9:30 a.m.–4:00 p.m. daily.

Accessibility: Information about accessibility and resources, one-to-one aides, sighted guides, mobility equipment rentals, and a sensory map and tools can be found at [www.zoo.org/access](http://www.zoo.org/access). For questions or to request disability accommodations for zoo programs or events, contact [zooinfo@zoo.org](mailto:zooinfo@zoo.org).

For more information or to become a zoo member, visit [www.zoo.org](http://www.zoo.org) or call 206.548.2500. Follow the zoo on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#).

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