

Preface

Bats (Chiroptera in zoological terms) are unique in the Kingdom of animals: they fly obviously like birds—but are not birds, since the females give birth to their descendents and let them suck milk. In daytime they sleep/stay in hiding places. All bat species become active only in the dusk time and keep active until dawn. Some species start their quick fluttering flights in order to catch their food consisting of flying insects, while other species fly at night from their dayover sleeping places at the top of trees to fruit plantations, where they cut off pieces from mangos, pears, apples, etc. A few other species in South and Central America even attack mammals, scratch their skin, and lick the leaking blood. This strict nocturnal activity led to the fact that many humans never had a chance to snap a close look at the body and features of bats. Thus, it is understandable that their silent flight while scurrying close to a person may cause fear and gives surely no chance to detect details from the body of these bats. Their hidden way of life poses also big problems for researchers to investigate their life cycle, morphology, their potential vectorship for agents of diseases, etc. Thus, the recent knowledge on bats is rather poor compared to that on other zoological genera. Since former generations of humans had much less possibilities to get information on these nocturnal animals and the strong belief that during the night only malicious diabolic individuals of any kind fly around, myths on bats were created and transferred orally from generation to generation reaching until today in some countries.

Thus, this book throws some glimpses in ten different chapters on the different features of bats covering their morphology, their biology, their potential vectorship of agents of diseases, and their own parasites and on similarly looking parasites. Furthermore, special attention is given at the numerous myths that had been told or are still told on these unique organisms. This all together is presented to all who are interested in natural and especially in biological phenomena.

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Facts and Myths

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