



Vampire Bat

Desmodus rotundus

Geographical Range: Common vampire bats are found in Central and South America (except the southern tip), Margarita and Trinidad Islands.

Habitat: You will find these bats in arid and humid areas of the tropics and sub tropics. They usually inhabit caves but can also be found in hollow trees, old wells, mine shafts and abandoned buildings.

Exhibit Location: The vampire bat is located in our M & T Bank Rainforest Falls Exhibit in the center of the Zoo.

Physical Characteristics: These bats are dark gray or brownish in color on the head and back, with paler undersides. Common vampire bats have pointed ears, no tail and larger thumbs than other species of vampire. They have very few teeth because of their liquid diet, but the few teeth they do have are razor sharp. They have deep grooves in their lower lip that aids them in lapping up blood. Vampire bats have a heat sensing organ on the tip of their nose that helps them to locate the blood vessels close to the skin on their prey.

Diet: Vampire bats feed entirely on blood. In the wild, they prefer to feed from slow, domestic animals like cows and horses. In captivity, these bats are given blood, obtained from slaughterhouses.

Did you know?

- In the process of searching for food, they may fly only three feet from the ground to an exposed area of an animal and then painlessly cut away a small piece of skin.
- The saliva of vampire bats has an anticoagulant to keep the blood flowing and prevent it from clotting while they are feeding. They feed for about 30 minutes, but do not remove enough blood to harm their host. Their bites may cause infection and disease.

Status: Vampire bat populations are healthy throughout their range. In many Latin countries, however, government-sponsored programs attempt to eradicate vampire bats. Over the last several decades, cattle ranches spread throughout Mexico, Central and South America. Vampire bat populations soared and their range expanded, as cattle are easy targets. Unfortunately, vampire bats can transmit rabies and other diseases to cattle. Annually, over 100,000 cattle die from the bites of vampire bats, and ranchers lose millions of dollars in revenue. During these eradication programs, people kill other harmless bat species mistaken for vampire bats. Additionally, many species of bats are in trouble due to destruction of their habitat and roosting sites.