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Bats Mimic Other Predators To Find Food All Year Round

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A newly published research revealed how bats mimic behavior from the same and different species as they search for food. These findings are crucial in the adaptation and survival of animals. (Radek Mica | Getty Images)

(*Lophostoma silvicolum*).

Researchers from the University of Toronto experiment on a variety of bat species to determine how they adopt food hunting techniques.

Krista Patriquin and Rachel Page, the lead researchers of the study, which was published in *Science Advances*, said that their purpose is to investigate if bats are able to learn food searching from other species (heterospecifics) as fast as they do from their own (conspecifics).

The first round of observations was conducted in fringe-lipped bats (*Trachops cirrhosus*) by using a computer-generated tone that signal food rewards as they were exposed to a different species of bats. The same type of adaptation technique was applied to another set of bats: the White-throated, round-eared bat

"[The fringe-lipped bats] took [sic] longer to recognize this artificially generated sound as a signal for food, presumably because it was not a sound that was familiar to them," Page said.

Despite the ability of the bats from the two different species to mimic each other, the scientists learned that bats prefer to thrive alongside bats of the same species.

The research concluded that fringe-lipped bats are "consummate learners," who are able to acquire new valuable information from both conspecifics and heterospecifics.

Other animals that possess heterospecific learning are wild birds and baby vervet monkeys. Wild birds tend to eavesdrop on other species, while a certain breed of monkeys can recognize signals pertaining to danger.

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Trial And Error

Various sounds were tested to ensure that these are unnatural to the bats. Page's team also wanted to determine if the winged animals will be able to tolerate such sounds as long as they are conditioned there will be a reward.

"Each pulse was a high-pitched 'Eeee, eeee'. You could visibly see they were not happy because they would shake their heads in response to the sound," Patriquin [said](#).

The study took six months at the [Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute](#) in Gamboa, Panama. The researchers, together with the bats, were housed in a giant metal cage to prevent disturbances like rain.

The ability of bats to evolve in food hunting is crucial for survival especially that their average lifespan takes 40 years.

STRI intern Jenna Kohles, a masters' student at the University of Konstanz, commented that these data presents a new insight in understanding how communities of animals can share information from one species to another as their environments and food resources change.

 TAG Bats , Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute , Science Advances , Zoology

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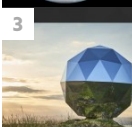
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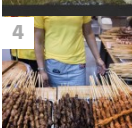
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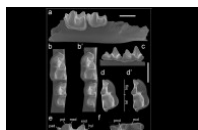
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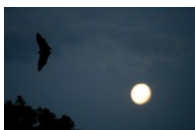
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