

Dr. Brock Fenton – January 9, 2026 GTLLI Lecture

My career in bats started about 1965 when I graduated from Queen's University. From there, I worked at the ROM and University of Toronto until 1969, when I was hired in the Biology Department at Carleton University. Since then I have also worked at York University and the University of Western Ontario. I have studied bats far and wide, from sites in Canada and the US, South and Central America, Africa, Papua New Guinea, Australia, Jamaica and Cuba. My presentation is supported by photographs of bats in action.

My interest in bats began in the summer of 1951 when my family and I stayed at a cottage near Atherly, outside Orillia. Some of the details are presented in a book, "A Miscellany of Bats" by Jens Rydell and me, published by Pelagic press.

Bats are fascinating, a gift that keeps on giving, ideal subjects for lifelong learning. Whether you are interested in flight or echolocation (Biosonar) bats are fascinating to study. Bats are small mammals (4 to 30 grams in Canada, 2 to 1500 grams worldwide). There are over 1500 species of bats in the world with only 8 in Ontario, a small number compared to the over 100 in Belize and other tropical countries.

Most bats eat insects, but others take other animals, from frogs to fish to other bats. Bats are best noted as blood-feeders (vampires). Three species of vampires occur in the world, all in South and Central America and not in Canada, Transylvania, Europe or Australia. Other species of bats visit flowers, eating pollen and drinking nectar, while some eat fruit.

Bats are not dangerous except as animals that can spread rabies. Bats have teeth and will bite in self defense, which could result in exposure to rabies. People should not handle bats unless they have been vaccinated against rabies.

Bats are simply wonderful and wondrous.