

Vampire bats recognise their prey's breathing

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Vampire bats, the only mammals to feed exclusively on blood, including human blood, recognize their prey by the sound of its breathing.

In a study published today in the open access journal *BMC Biology*, vampire bats of the species *Desmodus rotundus* could recognise recorded human breathing sounds much better than human participants could. Vampire bats feed on the same prey over several nights and the authors of the study propose that the bats use breathing sounds to identify their prey in the same way as humans use voice to recognise each other.

In a study conducted by Udo Groeger and Lutz Wiegrefe from the Ludwig-Maximilians-Universitaet in Munich, Germany, two vampire bats were taught to associate recordings of different humans breathing with different cattle blood dispensers, providing food rewards. They were then played short clips of people breathing and had to associate them with the correct individual by going to the correct dispenser. Four human participants were asked to associate the same short clips with the correct individual.

The vampire bats were able to spontaneously associate the clips with the particular individuals, regardless of whether the individual was recorded breathing at rest or breathing while under physical strain. The human participants were also able to recognise some clips, but they were unable to recognise the clips of breathing recorded under physical strain.

Source: BioMed Central Limited

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