
Preface

Preface to the first edition

This book is aimed primarily at undergraduate and graduate students wishing to learn about bats, but also aims to show how a study of one group of animals can contribute to a wider understanding of the processes that shape the natural world. It therefore has two main objectives. The first is to give an account of the biology of the world's bats, emphasizing those aspects that are unique or highly adapted, notably flight and echolocation. The second objective is to illustrate processes and concepts of broad biological relevance, many of which are major themes in current research. The coverage is broad, but by no means comprehensive. I have tried to make the book accessible to the growing number of bat enthusiasts in all walks of life, by giving some relevant background to what I imagine are the more difficult sections and by explaining terminology and principles that may be unfamiliar.

Preface to the second edition

In this updated and expanded version my aim has not changed, but the state of bat biology has! Scientific and public interest in bats has grown considerably in recent years and the scientific literature on bats has exploded. There have been significant

advances in almost all areas of bat biology and most chapters have required a major rewrite and expansion. In some areas developments have been so significant I have created new chapters. I have also included a major chapter on conservation. My interest in bats began in conservation and it has also been responsible for the shift in my own research from biomechanics to bat ecology. Bats are under threat from habitat destruction, degradation and fragmentation, from climate change, and from the many other pressures humans bring to bear on the planet. They therefore need our help. As a large, diverse, and widespread group of animals, their value as indicators of environmental health has long been evident to biologists and has recently been more widely recognized. Although the book is broader in its scope than its parent it is now even more difficult to be comprehensive, so I apologize if your favourite subject gets too little attention! It is increasingly difficult to do justice to the technical complexity of many areas of study in a book of such breadth. I have tried to walk that fine line: giving you sufficient detail to properly inform without getting you mired in the detail. In bringing you up to date with the key advances in our knowledge and understanding of bats, I hope I have also illustrated some of the major changes in the way we think about and study the natural world.