

Biology Seminar



Western
UNIVERSITY · CANADA

12:30 - 1:30 pm

Friday, January 22, 2021

Seminar to be held via ZOOM



Nancy B. Simmons

Curator-in-Charge

Department of Mammalogy

Division of Vertebrate Zoology

American Museum of Natural History

New York City

Bat Diversity in a Changing World

Bats are among the most diverse and widespread of all mammals, occupying a wide range of ecological niches and displaying a remarkable range of morphologies and behaviors. Ongoing research around the world including surveys of remote areas, acoustic studies, and genomic analyses have resulted in recognition of a large number of new bat species in recent years, many of them parts of cryptic species complexes. Our understanding of geographic ranges similarly keeps changing. The Global Bat Taxonomy Working Group of the IUCN Bat Specialist Group has been working to catalog this diversity and make it available for users worldwide through an online portal. Unfortunately, much of this diversity is threatened: over 15% of bat species are now considered vulnerable to extinction, and this number may actually be far higher because little is known about many species. Threats to bats have been increasing rapidly in recent years, with habitat loss, hunting, human disturbance, and climate change leading the list of threats to various species. Much attention is now focusing on bats and disease due to COVID-19, raising new opportunities for research but also requiring new levels of care in working with bats and communicating about bats to the public. New resources are being developed to help bat researchers with these challenges, including new guidelines for research and handling bats from the IUCN Bat Specialist Group and information for bat scientists through the new GBatNet (Global Union of Bat Diversity Networks). It is more important than ever that bat researchers around the world work together to better understand and protect bats in the changing world.

