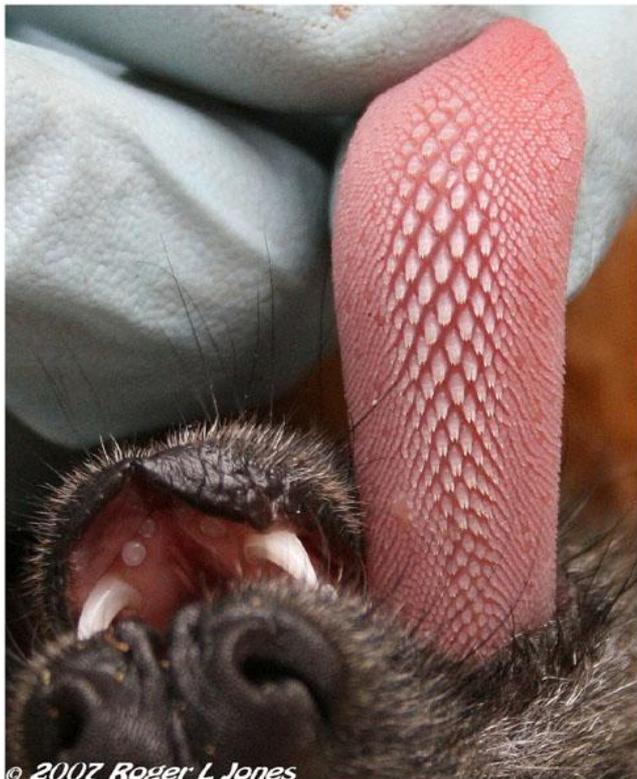


Bats tongues

Article and all uncredited photos by Jude Hirstwood

To be honest I have never thought very deeply about bat's tongues, my priority has always been to focus on their teeth when handling bats. However, a photograph of Roger Jones' got me thinking and digging through our photo collection . . .

Roger took this photo in 2007 while in Australia studying fruit bats. The bat had been anaesthetised and he took the opportunity to take these photos.



© 2007 Roger L Jones

The very rough papillae help the bat to devastate fruit. Meanwhile in Trinidad some of the nectar feeding bats have impressively long tongues and were given a

sugar drink after being mist netted. These bats can extend their tongue far more than is shown here. von Helveren reports that this *Glossophaga soricina* (**Pallas's long-tongued bat**) has an operational tongue length of up to 77 mm. Found in an Andean cloud forest in Ecuador, *Anoura fistulata* (aka **the tube-lipped nectar bat**) evolved mutually with an extremely long, bell-shaped flower, armed with a tongue that retracts into the bat's rib cage. *A. fistulata* is now the only animal that can pollinate the flower. I use this illustration in

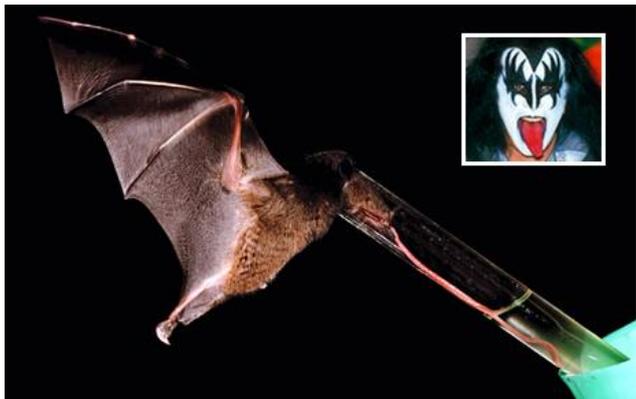


my talks to schools and it always goes down a storm.

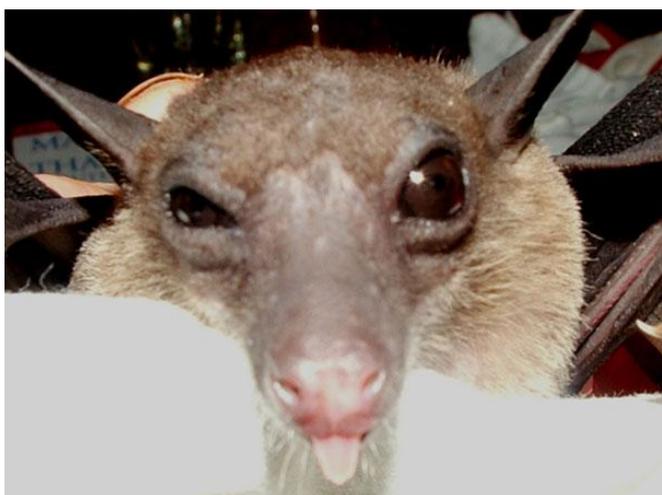


This little *Anoura geoffreyi* (**Geoffrey's Tailless Bat**) is often found with its tongue sticking out. Notice the ectoparasite on its right ear.

It has a relative whose tongue is longer:



Picture: <http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2006/12/061206-tongue-photo.html>



This dozy looking creature was a **nectar bat** we caught in Thailand. They were amongst the gentlest bats I have ever seen and may not have been candidates for the bat world equivalent of Mensa– their lolling tongue didn't help their image any.

Frankly I don't see what the fuss is about



And let us not forget our friend the **vampire**. Vampire bats use their tongues to lap up their victims' blood. This amazing photo is from the arkive web site and is © Nick Gordon / www.ardea.com

<http://www.arkive.org/common-vampire-bat/desmodus-rotundus/image-G16542.html>



And closer to home our captive **Noctule's** tongue may not be so large, but they still have an important role to play in holding food in place while sharp teeth perform the coup de grace. You don't normally notice her tongue as her mouth is open and shut in an instant.



To see this article in colour check the website.