

## Chastity helps bats win sperm wars

Illustration <http://angelcaido.deviantart.com/art/Carollia-perspicillata-B-353815662>

After defeating other males in boxing matches and winning a territorial roost—and a bevy of females—a male Seba's short-tailed bat (*Carollia perspicillata*, pictured) might think his battles for reproductive rights are over. But the defeated males of this Neotropical species have a trick up their sleeve: clandestine matings with willing females. The tactic works, and now researchers know why. Scientists studied bats in a captive colony in Switzerland, removing alpha males from their harems for 3 days, and examining their sperm—as well as that of their rivals. A previous study showed that the sneaky males have faster, longer lived sperm, which gives them a leg-up on the alpha male. Researchers had suspected this was because the sneakers produced this super sperm to compete. But the new study finds that after the 3 days of abstinence, the alpha male's sperm is as agile and vigorous as that of his rivals. Thus, the team reports today in the *Journal of Experimental Biology*, the sneaky males aren't generating special sperm—they just mate less, so their sperm is in better shape when it comes time to race to the egg.

July 2016

