

A large flock of bats is silhouetted against a vibrant sunset sky. The sky is filled with warm orange and yellow light, with scattered clouds. The bats are concentrated in a diagonal path from the bottom left towards the top right, creating a sense of movement and density.

# Beastly Bloodsuckers

 **beanstack** originals



# Beastly Bloodsuckers

Discover real-life vampires!



It's true—vampires exist. But they aren't the monsters from scary stories. Instead, these are animals who drink blood to survive. Read on to meet some vampires of the animal world.

## Going Batty

Flittering through the night sky, a bat comes to land on a sleeping cow. Using its sharp teeth, the bat gives the cow a small bite. Then, it uses its long tongue to drink the cow's blood. That's right—it's a vampire bat! Vampire bats are some of the most famous of all the blood-drinking animals. However, unlike the vampires from stories, vampire bats usually do not feed on humans.

Vampire bats prefer to feed on cattle, like cows. In fact, vampire bats feed entirely on blood. They even have a special substance in their spit, or saliva, that helps keep the blood flowing. But don't worry: their bites don't normally hurt the cow. Sometimes, vampire bats can carry a disease, called rabies, that is dangerous to cows and people. However, this is very rare. Most times, the cow goes on sleeping and wakes up perfectly fine.

### DID YOU KNOW?

**Scientists are studying the special substance found in a vampire bat's saliva. They think it can be used to make medicines that are helpful to people.**



## Beastly Bloodsuckers



Vampire finch on a sandy beach.

### Blood-Drinking Birds

Vampire bats might be the most famous kind of vampire, but they are not the only blood-drinking animals. Meet the vampire finch. Like other birds, the vampire finch has feathers, a beak, and lays eggs. However, it also has an unusual habit: it uses its sharp beak to sip on the blood of larger birds.

Vampire finches live on the Galápagos Islands, located in the Pacific Ocean. The Galápagos Islands are very far out in the ocean, so there is not much food. Scientists think this may be why vampire finches drink blood. The vampire finch likes to eat seeds and insects. However, when there is not enough food, it will instead take a tasty sip of blood from a larger bird.

#### FUN FACT

**There is another type of vampire that drinks the blood of humans: the mosquito!**

### Lurking Leeches

Unlike in the stories, not all vampires can fly. Instead, some swim! A leech is a type of vampire that lives in shallow, muddy waters like streams or lakes. Leeches are worms. Unlike most kinds of worms,



## Beastly Bloodsuckers



Medical leeches on a leech farm.

though, leeches have teeth. After attaching themselves to their prey with a sucker, leeches use their teeth to make a small cut in the animal's skin. Then, they drink some of its blood.

There are about 650 species of leech. Most are small, growing from teeny-tiny to several inches long. But some can be bigger: the giant Amazon leech can grow to be the length of a small house cat! Leeches seek out their prey by staying very still. When an animal passes by, they latch on using their sucker. Most of the time, leeches feed on the animals that live nearby. However, humans, beware: many of these tiny vampires will gladly take a sip!