Letters to Nature Kids

October, 2026 ❖ Number 28

Dear Nature Kids,

Do you remember your first Halloween costume? Did you dress up as a superhero, someone who can defeat the bad guys? Or you might have dressed up as a favorite TV character. Lots of kids dress up to look like something scary, like ghosts and monsters.

As it gets dark on Halloween, the “monsters” come out. It’s the kids, going from house to house, saying “trick or treat” and getting treats. It’s always after dark, right? The holiday is about the dark of night, and the scary things that come out when it’s dark.

The Halloween parties and greeting cards are all decorated with things that come out at night. Bats, spiders, and black cats, right? And pumpkins, which aren’t scary and don’t do anything special at night. Unless we have carved a face into the pumpkin and light a candle inside it so it glows … at night.



My nature friends all love the fun of Halloween. But we would like it if no one was afraid of the dark. We wish nobody was afraid of the animals that fly and crawl and hunt in the dark.

It seems like people have always been creeped out by bats. Everybody knows that the right time to fly is during daylight, like the birds do. And would we feel better if those bats would get some feathers to put on that bare skin? Like birds, and like angels.



But bats mostly live their lives in the dark, finding their way around by making sounds and hearing how the sound bounces back off objects. They fly really fast and don't bump into things, and they even locate the insects they eat using their bat-sonar. They eat so many flying insects that we should think of them as our friends.

You know those movies about Count Dracula, who can change into a bat and who drinks the blood of the living? Those stories are pretty scary, and they come from just a little bit of truth. The Count was based on a real military ruler from long ago who was really cruel. And there are vampire bats that do feed on the blood of animals.

Vampire bats live in countries south of us. Only one vampire bat has ever been found in Texas, and it was near the border with Mexico. And those vampire bats mostly feed on the blood of birds. We don't have to worry about a bat biting our neck to suck the blood.

Bats can have rabies, just like any other mammal. (Did you know that bats are mammals, like us?) Rabies is a very dangerous virus, but bats don't "carry" it. That is, they don't live healthy lives while the rabies virus lives in their bodies. They can catch rabies, and if they do, they will die, just as a raccoon or a skunk with rabies will die.



An old illustration of bats

I'm not trying to take the fun out of Halloween, but I hope you don't let Halloween stories keep you afraid of nighttime animals.

Scary stories can be fun, and dressing up and being scary can be fun, too. As long as everyone knows it's just for fun – don't let anyone scare you badly just to be mean to you, that's bullying. Have fun on Halloween, and then afterwards remember that it was all pretend.

Michael





© 2026. Letters to Nature Kids is offered to you by Cross Timbers Connection, a North Texas organization whose goal is connecting people with nature. Please visit us (and find past and future letters) at www.CrossTimbersConnection.org. And if you have questions, suggestions, or would like to write to us, you can reach us through the Contact page at our website!