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ScienceShot: How Bats Tell Friend From Foe

by Daniel Strain on July 2, 2010 4:56 PM | [Permanent Link](#) | [2 Comments](#)

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Credit: Dina Dechmann

Need to signal the Caped Crusader? Try an ultrasonic chirp, not a spotlight. The same sonar calls that bats use to navigate at night may also help them to tell friends from strangers, according to scientists. Lesser bulldog bats (*Noctilio albiventris*) roost with hundreds of other bats but bond and hunt side by side with only a handful. In a study [published](#) in the this month's issue of *Animal Behaviour*, researchers watched how these bats responded to a suite of sonar call recordings. Individuals grew antsy after hearing bats from different social groups versus hearing bats they knew well; they brayed with low vocalizations called “honks” (which sound like [clicks](#) to our ears) or stretched their wings more. This ultrasonic ID may help bats to spot their chums in a chaotic roost and, like a walkie-talkie, may also help groups to communicate on hunting expeditions, researchers say.

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