

# Is it a bird? Is it a plane? NO, it's a bat!

## Bats are NOT birds!

They are however the only mammal which can truly fly! Other mammals such as squirrel gliders and sugar gliders, do not fly but glide through the air giving the appearance of flight.

Bats can hold food and hang onto branches with their clawed thumbs. When cold or wet you can see them wrap their wings around themselves.

Bat wings are thinner than a birds, are more agile and can move quicker than birds.

Below is a diagram of the skeletal structure of a bat's wing. It is almost identical to a human hand and arm, only elongated and much smaller.



Bats also have a thin membrane of elastic-like skin which stretches across the fingers to form the wing. The membrane is so thin it appears transparent when flying. If you feel the skin on your eyelid, that is what their winged membrane feels like! The finger bones of bats are more flexible than other mammals, and they are flattened instead of circular, making it even more flexible.

To enable sustained flight, bats must have well developed chest and forearm muscles to power strong wing beats. Bats use a lot of energy so have to launch themselves from a high perch, dropping down to build up speed before flying upwards. People mistake this behaviour as a form of swooping but this is not the case.

