



WILD
FACTS

HEAR THE ROAR



Dear Alex

Halloween is here! Here are five animals with a fearsome reputation... or are they simply misunderstood? You decide.

Hyena

The hyena's cackling laugh might be enough to send shivers down your spine, but [spotted hyena](#) are actually misunderstood animals, with a reputation for being cowardly and sly. Did you know they are actually really intelligent and affectionate animals? Give them a break!



Vampire bats

The world's largest carnivorous bat species don't really turn into vampires, but they do have a taste for blood. Native to North and South America, they prey mainly on cattle and other large mammals by making a small wound with their razor-sharp teeth and then licking up the blood. Bats play a vital role in ecosystems around the world. In the UK, bats are an [indicator species](#). This means that changes to our bat populations can indicate changes in the environment.



Sharks

Sharks, especially great whites, put fear into many swimmers or surfers. But sharks aren't really the ferocious killers they are made out to be. Of the nearly 500 species of shark, most are harmless. The great white, tiger and bull sharks are responsible for the majority of attacks. On average, only five people die from shark attacks every year. For every shark attack, humans kill approximately two million sharks – who's really the scary predator?



Vultures

Vultures are sometimes referred to as 'nature's clean-up crew' and feed on animals that have died in the wild. It's not the cleanest job but without them, these animals would rot, smell and could even end up contaminating a water supply used by many other animals. A vulture's body is perfectly adapted to do this job – their bald heads and necks prevent their feathers from getting dirty when they tuck into their lunch. They are brilliant flyers too and can glide for many hours in search of their next meal.



Crows

What do you call a group of crows? A murder of crows! No, this isn't a joke – it is a real term that we use (these terms are called collective nouns). Other creepy collective nouns include a cauldron of bats and an unkindness of ravens. Crows and ravens belong to the corvid family and are sometimes mistaken for one another. Ravens are much larger, have diamond-shaped tails in flight and live in rocky habitats mostly along coastlines, while crows have a rounded tail in flight and are seen almost everywhere in the UK.

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