

The ecology of bats and bat-flower interactions in Curaçao

Background and objectives

Within the context of the EU-funded Butterfly Project, our group will conduct bat sampling in the Caribbean island of Curaçao in 2026, with the goal of collecting data on the interactions between bats and flowering plants on the island. Our project aims at expanding the database of plant-pollinator interactions in the EU, which also includes overseas territories such as the Dutch Caribbean.

For this purpose, a field campaign will be conducted between March and June 2026. The campaign will include nocturnal fieldwork, netting, the processing and identification of bats *in situ*, and the collection of pollen samples. We are seeking a motivated Master's student interested in tropical ecology, plant-pollinator interactions, hands-on fieldwork, and bat biology and ecology to join us for fieldwork and data collection, which can be developed into a Master's thesis within our group. Although the project's focus is on flower-visiting bats, captures will potentially also include bats from other guilds, which also opens up the possibility of not restricting the thesis to flower-visiting bats.



Project activities

- Setting up research plots and transects on the island, and performing nocturnal fieldwork in Curaçao, from March to June 2026.
- Capture, identification, and trait measurements of bats.
- Potentially, work in the laboratory in Freising, depending on the data desired for the thesis.
- Processing and analysis of ecological data derived from fieldwork (bat population, community, and interaction data).

Timeframe

- Start: early 2026, ideally two months before the trip to allow for preparations.
- End of fieldwork is late May or early June. End of the project and thesis submission is flexible.
- In the field station in Curaçao, ca. 40-60 h/week, flexible. Ca. 30 hours/week at Freising afterwards (flexible).
- The project may start before thesis registration if desired.

We offer

- A unique opportunity to gain experience with fieldwork and ecological research in a Neotropical environment.
- An excellent research location with infrastructure to support researchers.
- Travel logistics and equipment, but funding for the trip may only be partially covered. Applying for external funding (e.g., TUM international grants) is highly encouraged to cover accommodation costs in the station.
- A vibrant and international working environment in our group at the TUM for writing your thesis.

Your profile

- Currently enrolled as a Master's student.
- Previous experience with fieldwork. Having performed nocturnal fieldwork is a plus.
- Ideally, some experience with ecology, zoology, bat research, or plant-pollinator interactions.
- Suitability for working in tropical conditions: interest in tropical nature, **yellow fever vaccine**, physical fitness, resistance, and problem-solving mind.
- Having a **rabies vaccination** to handle wild mammals.
- Interested in learning and using community-wide statistical analysis. Experience with R is desired but not necessary.
- Flexible working hours. Availability for intense and extended fieldwork (ca. 3 months)
- Good command of English.
- An international driver's license is a plus, although not necessary.

Please send your CV and your application, or contact us for questions, using the address below

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