Neil

Dr Winifred Frick is the chief scientist at Bat Conservation International, a group of environmentalists working to protect bats.

Sam

Here she is telling BBC World Service programme, The Documentary, about another useful service provided by bats in the United States:

Dr Winifred Frick

Most bats are **insectivorous** and they're really important consumers of different kinds of insect **pests** and here in the United States it's been estimated ____ bats provide billions of dollars every year to the US agricultural industry through their voracious consumption of agricultural pest insects.

Neil

Most bats eat ____ insects – they're **insectivores**.

Sam

That's good news for farmers because they eat many **pests** - insects or small animals that are harmful or damage crops.

Neil

Even better, bats' appetite for these annoying insects is **voracious** – very strong and eager.

Sam

So far, so ____ in the friendship between humans and bats. But then along came the coronavirus pandemic and with it, newspaper reports that bats might be to blame.

Neil

Before we get into this, we need to explain some terms. The Covid which people around the world have been suffering from is the 'outbreak virus'. But if you go backwards there's an intermediary known as the 'progenitor virus' ____ this and the 'ancestral virus', which is decades or centuries older.

Sam

Ninety-nine percent of scientists would agree that the 'ancestral virus' of Covid 19 ____ from bats. But it's the go-between 'progenitor virus' that everyone is searching for now.

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Neil

One of the scientists leading this search is Linfa Wang, a professor at Duke Medical School who is known as the 'Batman of Singapore'. Here he is explaining his work to BBC World Service's, The Documentary:

Prof Linfa Wang

Of course the **holy grail** right now for Covid-19 is to discover where is that progenitor virus and also in which kind of animals or humans, [redacted]? And usually, the progenitor virus has to be 99.9% identical to the outbreak virus and so our study was set up to do that. If you can catch that virus and you demonstrate the genomic sequence is 99.9% [identical] then **that's brilliant**.

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