Neil
Hello. This is 6 Minute English from BBC Learning English. I'm Neil.

Sam
And I'm Sam.

Neil
For centuries the _____ between humans and bats has been complex. In some cultures, bats are depicted as vampires, associated with Halloween, witches and dark, scary places. In others they are considered messengers of the gods.

Sam
Bats play an _____ part in stories and myths from around the world. And a large illuminated 'bat signal' shining in the night sky can mean only one thing – a call for help to the superhero, Batman!

Neil
So do we love or hate these furry flying mammals? And with some _____ headlines identifying bats as the possible source of Covid-19, should we think of them as friend or enemy?

Sam
We'll be answering all these questions soon, but first, Neil, time for another _____ bat fact. Did you know that bats account for 1 in 5 of all mammal species? There's a huge variety of them, from tiny fruit-eating bats that fit into the palm of your _____ to giant **carnivores**, or meat-eaters, with nearly two-metre wingspans.

Neil
That's right. In fact, it's the variety of bat types that might explain our complex feelings towards them. So, Sam, my quiz question is this: roughly how many different _____ of bat are there worldwide? Is it
a) one and a half thousand?
b) two and a half thousand? or
c) three and a half thousand?

Sam
Hmmm, I'll say b) two and a half thousand.

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Neil
OK, Sam, we'll come back to that later in the programme. Maybe not everyone likes them, but bats do have some friends. Farmers love them for pollinating their plants…

Sam
…and medical _____ study them hoping to discover the secrets of their anti ageing and long life.

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 _____ 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 that bats provide billions of dollars every year to the US agricultural industry through their voracious _____ of agricultural pest insects.

Neil
Most bats eat only 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 good in the _____ between humans and bats. But then along came the coronavirus pandemic and with it, newspaper reports that bats might be to blame.

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