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Dining With Bats  
Fisher, Ann

*by Ann Fisher*

Thanks to an innovative lecture/luncheon program sponsored by the Friends of Ryerson Woods (Lake County, Illinois), there are at least sixty people who will think about bats and maybe even thank them the next time they see a mango, bite into a cashew nut or take a sip of a peach daiquiri.

Dr. Merlin Tuttle came to the Ryerson Education Center accompanied by four bats (two of whom spent the night in my refrigerator). He showed the Friends his exquisite photographs of bats in their natural environments, explained their value, their natural history and the story of man's unrelenting, unjustified persecution of bats over time. Everyone was convinced that bats deserve all the help they can get.

Paul Beggan and Ruben Gibson from Bacardi Imports, Inc. were on hand to serve the Friends a special rum-peach drink which they dubbed, Ding's Delight, in honor of the "world's most famous bat" whose face graces the cover of Bacardi Imports' Inc. popular "bat booklet." Then everyone enjoyed a lunch featuring bat-dependent foods: pheasant with mango-rum sauce, sauteed plantains, squash with black and white pepper (one-third of the world's pepper supply is fertilized with guano from bat caves), a salad of figs, avocados and cashew nuts and, finally, a guava tart topped with a toasted cashew nut. The menu was specially designed for the occasion by Tom Trieschman, Executive Chef at Sinclair's of Lake Forest.

After lunch, the Friends learned about the work of Bat Conservation International and had an opportunity to meet Zuri, a Straw-colored Flying Fox, and Rafiki, an Angolan Fruit Bat. Dr. Tuttle walked up and down the aisle giving everyone an opportunity to pet a bat and ask questions about them. Zuri nonchalantly licked his fur and cleaned himself, much like a house cat, as Dr. Tuttle explained that bats are fastidious about cleanliness.

Finally, when all the myths our mothers told us about bats had been dispelled and everyone who wished to pet a bat had done so, I don't think there was anyone who was a Friend of Ryerson Woods who was not also a Friend of Bats.



*Dr. Merlin Tuttle, Tom Trieschman and Paul Beggan (left to right) introduce Zuri, BCI's*

*Straw-colored Flying Fox, to their special meal featuring foods from bat dependent plants.*  
*Photo courtesy John Babcock*

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