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Lock and Key

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Recent studies sponsored by BCI confirmed that lesser long-nosed bats (*Leptonycteris curasoae*) are the primary pollinators of organ pipe cacti in the Sonoran Desert. Merlin Tuttle's article about these and other cacti that rely on bats can be found in the current issue of *National Geographic* (June 1991).

In this cross-section of an organ pipe flower, the perfect fit of the bat to the blossom can clearly be seen. The bat's long tongue will extend for up a third of its body length to reach the nectar reward at the base. But to reach the nectar, it must insert its head into the flower just far enough to cover its face with a load of pollen. When the bat visits another flower, it will transfer the pollen, effecting cross-pollination.

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