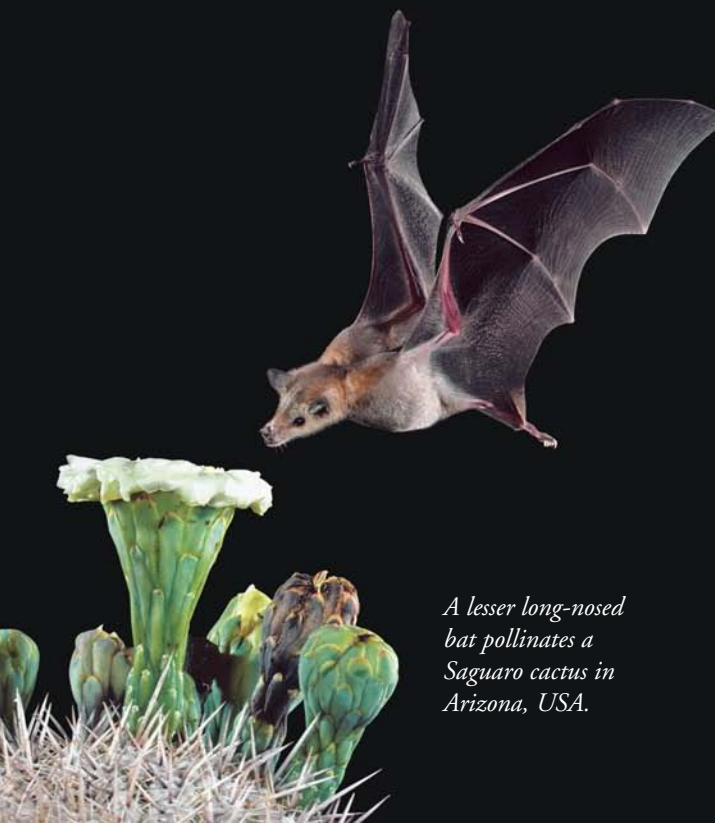




BATS ARE POLLINATORS TOO



*A lesser long-nosed
bat pollinates a
Saguaro cactus in
Arizona, USA.*

Pollinators, Not Pests

Enjoy your bananas, mangos and guavas – and thank the bats that help bring these and many other fruits and vegetables to your table. In deserts and rainforests all around the world, bats are essential to the health of entire ecosystems.

Most flowering plants cannot produce seeds and fruit without pollination – the process of moving pollen grains from the male part of the flower to the female part. And bats are essential pollinators of an incredible variety of plants, many of great economic and cultural value, including wild bananas, balsa, abaca, coconut palms, ceiba (kapok) and baobab trees.

If we lose our bats, we jeopardize the ecosystems upon which many human economies are based.

Wild Bananas – Short-nosed fruit bats (*right*) are one of several small fruit bats that serve as primary pollinators of wild bananas. These wild plants provide important genetic reservoirs that are used to improve crops and combat disease.



No Bats = No Durians! – The long-tongued dawn fruit bat (*below*) and other fruit bats pollinate durian flowers. Known as the “King of Fruits,” durian production adds millions of dollars annually to economies in Southeast Asia and nearby Pacific islands.



Take Action for Pollinators



A few of the fruits of bat-pollinated plants

You can make a difference! In the Philippines, Norma Monfort protected a cave of fruit bats that pollinate durian and other plants. This single act by one person has created a sanctuary where managers, landowners, researchers, educators, government officials, conservationists, teachers and the public now learn about the benefits of bats and what they can do to help.

- **Protect and respect** bats and encourage others to take care of local bat roosts.
- **Learn more** about bats: they are remarkable pollinators, insect eaters and seed dispersers that have a tremendous impact on the planet.
- **Speak out** and educate your friends, colleagues, and public officials about the benefits of bats.
- **Advocate** for the legal protection of bats and their habitats.
- **Cultivate native plants** that provide nectar for migratory bats.
- **Don't support** cave tourism that puts bat populations at risk. Advocate smart ecotourism.
- **Join Bat Conservation International.** Help BCI ensure that bats will still be on the job, keeping our natural world healthy for our children and grandchildren.

www.batcon.org/joinbci

Pollinating Bats at Risk

Pollinating bats are threatened around the world by habitat destruction, roost disturbance, climate change, illegal hunting for food, inappropriate guano mining, improper alteration of caves for tourism and even willful destruction resulting from prejudice and ignorance.

- **Roost Disturbance:** People entering caves and mines can drive bats away from important roosts.
- **Hunting:** Local consumption of bushmeat is being swamped by commercial hunting that kills entire populations of bats.



- **Human Persecution:** Without an appreciation of the value of bats, many people consider them vermin and sometimes destroy entire colonies.
- **Deforestation:** Extensive deforestation destroys critical roosts and habitat for many bat species.
- **Climate Change:** Changes in the timing of the flowering of key food plants along bats' migratory corridors can disrupt migration. These changes may result in starvation when food resources are scarce.



All photos © Merlin D. Tuttle, BCI

Beneficial Bats



As many as 20 million Mexican free-tailed bats like this one spend their winters in Mexico and summers at Bracken Bat Cave in Texas. Each night, they will consume up to 200 tons of insects, including major agricultural pests.

Bats are essential to maintaining healthy ecosystems and economies. Yet they are also among the most misunderstood and needlessly feared of the world's creatures. And their populations are declining worldwide.

In addition to the pollination that's critical for the production of valuable fruits and other products, bats also disperse the seeds of plants that are vital for the natural restoration of cleared or damaged rainforests. Other bat species are primary predators of night-flying insects that help reduce the need for chemical pesticides. In many countries, bat colonies provide sustainable sources of guano for commercial fertilizers. Some bat colonies have even become major ecotourism destinations, with financial benefits for local economies.



Tens of thousands of people visit the Congress Avenue Bridge in Austin, Texas, each summer to watch about 1½ million Mexican free-tailed bats emerge at dusk from their summer roosts under the downtown bridge. These visitors pour millions of dollars into the city's economy.

BAT CONSERVATION INTERNATIONAL

Bat Conservation International (BCI) was established in 1982 and is supported by members in more than 60 countries around the world. BCI's mission is to conserve the world's bats and their ecosystems in order to ensure a healthy planet. BCI has achieved unprecedented progress by emphasizing sustainable uses of natural resources that benefit both bats and people.

For more information, visit www.batcon.org


Other Links for Pollinator Information

North American Pollinator Protection Campaign
www.pollinator.org

Inter-American Biodiversity Information Network's
Pollinator Partnership (P2):
pollinators.iabin.net/consortium.html

Convention on Biological Diversity:
www.cbd.int/agro/pollinator.shtml

The Food and Agriculture Organization
of the United Nations:
[www.fao.org/biodiversity/ecosystems/
bio-pollinators/en/](http://www.fao.org/biodiversity/ecosystems/bio-pollinators/en/)



A southern blossom bat pollinates a swamp banksia flower in Australia.

BAT CONSERVATION
INTERNATIONAL
www.batcon.org