

## USDA Forest Service Celebrating Wildflowers

### Bat Pollination

After dark, moths and bats take over the pollinator night shift.

Bats are very important pollinators in tropical and desert climates. Most flower-visiting bats are found in Africa, Southeast Asia, and the Pacific Islands.

Two species of nectar-feeding bats, the lesser long-nosed bat and the Mexican long-tongued bat, migrate north a thousand miles or more every spring from Mexico into Arizona, New Mexico and Texas. Both are listed as [federally endangered species](#).

### Bat Flowers

The [flowers that are visited by bats](#) are typically:

- Open at night
- Large in size (1- 3.5 inches)
- Pale or white in color
- Very fragrant - fermenting or fruit-like odor
- Copious dilute nectar

Bats feed on the insects in the flowers as well as on the nectar and flower parts e.g. - calabash, sausage tree, areca palm, kapok tree, banana.

Over 300 species of fruit depend on bats for pollination. These fruits include:

- mangoes
- bananas
- guavas

The Agave plant and the Saguaro, state cactus of Arizona, also depend upon bats for pollination. The agave is an important plant because it is used to make tequila.

The picture to the right is a bat with its face covered in pollen. As this bat visits other flowers of the same species, it will become a vector for [pollination](#).

To learn more about bats and bat pollination, visit [Bat Conservation International's website](#).

Location: <http://www.fs.fed.us/wildflowers/pollinators/bats.shtml>

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Bat approaching a cactus flower



Bat with pollen on its face.

Photos on this web page by Merlin D. Tuttle, Bat Conservation International.