

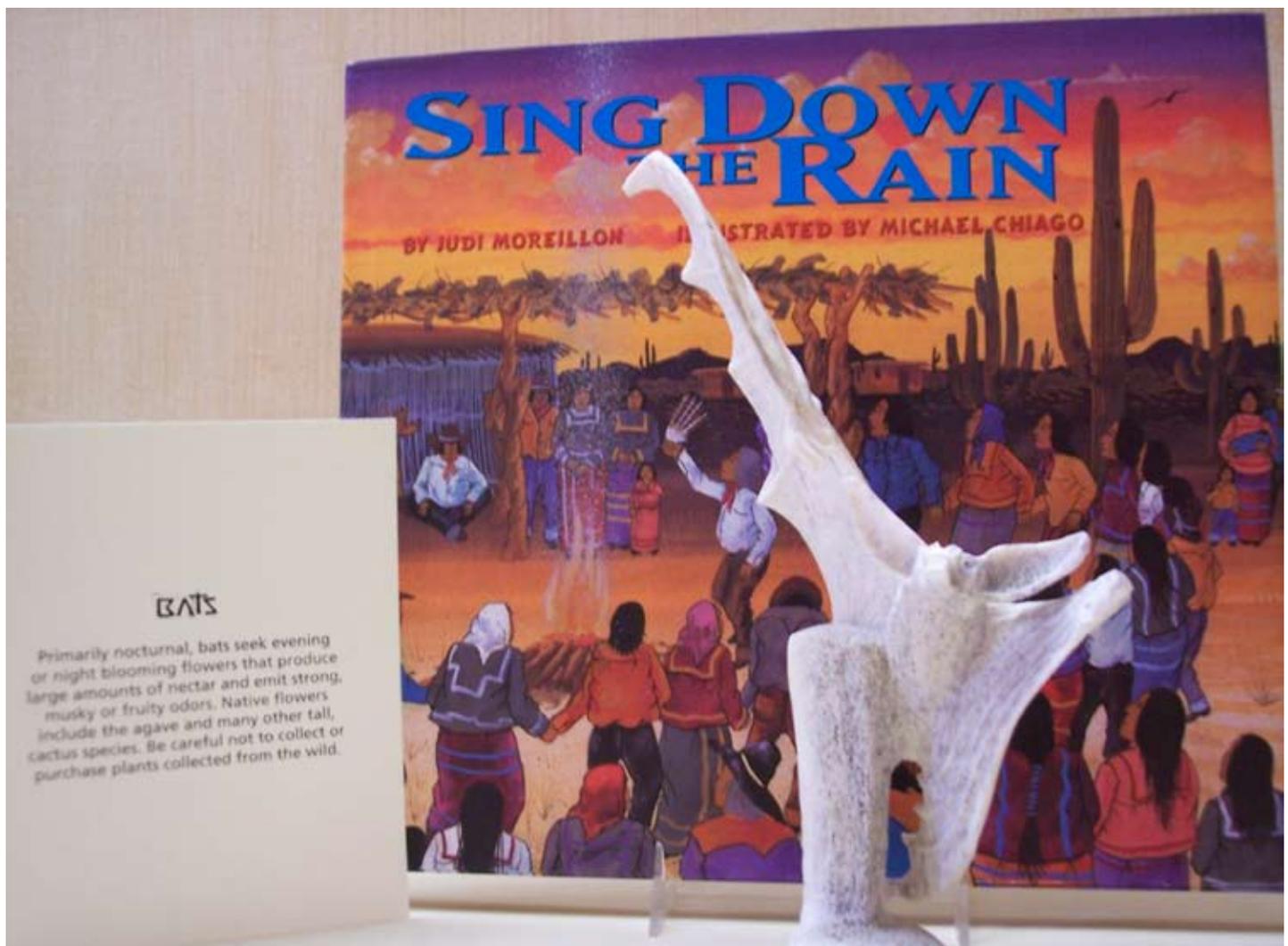
by Mary Byrne and
Patricia S. De Angelis

Pollinators, Plants, and People

Nearly 80 percent of the world's crops depend upon animals for pollination. Some estimates are that one out of every three bites of food people take every day comes from a plant that relies on an animal pollinator. Obviously, pollinator conservation is vital to healthy people and healthy ecosystems. This is the focus of the North American Pollinator Protection Campaign

(NAPPC), a collaboration of more than 100 partners that works to protect the health of resident and migratory pollinating animals in North America.

NAPPC experts have met each year since 2000 to focus on pollinator conservation. In anticipation of last year's meeting, which was hosted by the Department of Interior (DOI) in Washington, D.C., the NAPPC Public Land Managers'



PARTNERS FOR POLLINATORS

Task Force (PLMTF), comprised of federal agency representatives, set out to highlight DOI's work in native plant and pollinator conservation and to emphasize the importance of these species to people. As part of this effort, we collaborated with the DOI Museum (Hunter Hollins, Coordinator of Museum Services, and Debra Wurdinger, Museum Technician) and the DOI's Indian Craft Shop (Susan Pourian, Director) to develop communication plans to convey the "Pollinators, Plants, and People" message.

In September 2007, the DOI Museum opened the exhibit, "The Bats and the Bees: Pollination Systems in America." The exhibit showcased four North American systems involving a native plant, its pollinator, and a product from that relationship that is beneficial or economically important to humans. One of the featured systems is that of the endangered lesser long-nosed bat (*Leptonycteris yerbabuena*), agave (*Agave* sp.), and tequila. During the bats' annual migration from Mexico into the Sonoran Desert region of the United States, they rely on nectar provided by agave and other flowering desert plants to survive. In return, the bats perform a vital pollination role in agave reproduction. Without this pollinator/plant interaction, there would be no agave seeds produced to supply the tequila industry. Tequila, which is produced from fermented agave juice, had an estimated worth in 2005 of \$1 billion.

The Indian Craft Shop raised the public's awareness of the pollinator/plant relationship by highlighting Native American arts and crafts that depict, or are derived from, pollinators and the native plants that rely on them. During last year's National Pollinator Week (June 24-30, 2007), information tags about pollinator/plant relationships were displayed next to selected items in the shop. For instance, the tag on an item with a butterfly motif read: "There are 24 butterflies, moths and skippers listed

as endangered or threatened under the Endangered Species Act. Butterflies... prefer broad, flat-faced flowers. Purple coneflower provides food for butterflies... Try planting some in your yard – and watch the diversity they attract!" To learn more about the pollinators and plants in their area, readers were referred to two websites: www.pollinator.org and www.npg.gov/plants.

These collaborative efforts were well received and have had lasting effects. The DOI Museum exhibit, "The Bats and the Bees: Pollination Systems in America," will run indefinitely. A portable exhibit is being designed to take to K-12 classrooms to bring the native plant/pollinator conservation message to a younger audience. The Indian Craft Shop used the pollinator/plant tags again for this year's celebration of National Pollinator Week,

which took place June 22-28, 2008. We would like to express our gratitude to the DOI Museum and the Indian Craft Shop for making this pollinator awareness partnership such a great success!

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DOI Indian Craft Shop Photo