Name _____

Flowers Go Bats!

Visit a flower garden on a bright summer day. You will see bees and butterflies flying from flower to flower. These insects carry pollen from one flower to another. Flowers need this pollen to make seeds. The flowers attract insects with sweet smells and sweet sugar water called nectar.

Visit the Arizona desert on a warm spring night, and you will see see something very different. The giant Saguaro cactus grows in the Sonoran Desert. In springtime, the white flowers of this cactus open for a single night.

At night, bees and butterflies are sleeping. But bats are awake—and they like sweet nectar, too. To get nectar, bats push their heads deep into the cactus flowers. Pollen falls on the bat's hairy head. When the bat flies to another flower, it carries the pollen with it. All night long, bats fly from cactus flower to cactus flower.

By moving pollen from flower to flower, bats help the Saguaro cactus make seeds. And that's good for all the animals in the desert. Hawks perch and nest on Saguaro cactus plants. Smaller birds nest in holes in the giant cactuses' stem. Bats and birds also eat the fruit of this cactus.

The flowers of the Saguaro cactus aren't the only ones that bats visit. If you like bananas, you should thank the bats. Bananas —and more than 500 other kinds of fruit plants—count on bats to move pollen from flower to flower.