

# Field Moment

## Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument

25 May 2004

**C**LOAKED IN POLLEN, A normally cinnamon-brown-colored lesser long-nosed bat (*Lep-tonycteris curasoae yerbabuena*), a federally endangered species, is in the gloved hand of biological technician Ami Pate at Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument (Arizona). “Usually this time of year, the lesser long-nosed bats can be found with a dusting of light, cream-colored saguaro cactus flower pollen on their heads,” Pate explains. “However, most of the ones we caught that night were covered in bright yellow agave pollen because saguaros were not in bloom. The bats practically stained the mist net orange!”

Lesser long-nosed bats are well adapted to feed on and pollinate saguaros (*Carnegiea gigantea*), organpipe cactus (*Stenocereus thurberi*), and agaves (*Agave* spp.). They easily see and smell the night-blooming flowers, which have a strong melon scent, and with their long snouts and brush-tipped tongues extract rich quantities of nectar produced by the desert plants to ensure that pollinators find them during their brief blooming period.

Pate and her resource management colleagues conduct annual bat surveys at Bull Pasture, an area of dense succulents in the national monument. Over a period of several nights in late spring, the survey crew captures and identifies feeding bats, which are then released. The baseline information helps managers assess population trends and other changes in the desert ecosystem.



NPS/AMI PATE (2)

