

BATS, BEES & BUTTERFLIES

by Kitty Katzell

Did you know there are over 1200 species of bats? While most eat insects, others eat fruits, fish, and even small mammals. That information, and a great deal more, can be found in the current exhibit on the Nature Preserve bulletin board in the Atrium. Every few months **Steve Denham** puts up a new exhibit, colorful, attractive, and certainly instructive.



The bat display includes several 3-D bats, illustrations of several species, and text about bat habitats, New Jersey bats, echolocation, bat size, rabies, White Nose Syndrome, and beneficial bats. White Nose Syndrome is a serious threat to bats. Common in Europe, it is now spreading through the Northeastern United States. It's a long story, but one that you might want to read. In the space above the exhibit are two strips of bat forms, illustrating the widest and the narrowest of bat wing spans. Text in the display tells us that most insect-eating bats eat close to half their body weight in insects every night, or about 2000 insects per bat. Without bats, some insects would be eating plants, and others would be biting you and me.

Two of the earlier displays that Steve posted on the Nature Preserve bulletin board featured bees and butterflies. Like the bats, the bees were presented in both two and three dimensions. For this, Steve mounted selected pictures on gummed pads, so the bees (or bats) seem to float in the air. The bee exhibit also gave the scientific classification of honey bees, explained bees' function in pollination, and the production



of honey. Among the interesting facts in that exhibit was that it may take 10 million bee trips to make a 16-ounce jar of honey.



Honey Bee with tongue partway extended

Another of Steve's Nature Preserve exhibits was about butterflies. Again, colorful, instructive, a work of art. There was an explanation for how the butterfly got its name. Another section provided assorted facts about butterflies such as: there are some 18,000 species; the largest has a wingspan of more than a foot, the smallest, about half an inch; some fly as fast as 30 mph, others at 5 mph. A full page explained the life cycle of the monarch butterflies that migrate to and from Mexico.



As a youngster, Steve was a Boy Scout, and when his son was a child, Steve used to take him on nature walks. But Steve's career as a commercial airline pilot was hardly related to nature study. He now serves as a member of the MLRA Council and of the Nature Trails Committee.