

Power of Pollination



A central-Illinois man is acknowledged for his work with insect pollinators.

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Jim Wiker's fascination with insects started as a 4-year-old and a collection he entered in the county fair a few years later.

Forty-plus years later, this passionate, self-taught, well-published entomologist received international recognition from The North American Pollinator Protection Campaign and The Pollinator Partnership for what has become much more than a hobby.

Approximately 80 percent of the world's food crops—including more than 150 foods grown in the United States—depend on one or more pollinator to produce their crop. This daunting job is carried out by more than 100,000

Jim Wiker's life-long passion for insects recently garnered him an international award.

species of invertebrates (bees, moths, butterflies, beetles and flies) and 1,035 species of birds, mammals and reptiles.

Because pollinators play a critical role economically and environmentally, the pollinator organizations annually recognize a few individuals for their work.

Wiker works at a Springfield hospital, and because of his insect knowledge has been an affiliate of the Illinois State Museum and Illinois Natural History Survey for more than 30 years. His home includes a laboratory housing his insect collection and a personal entomological library which is one of the largest in the



Stan McTaggart (left), Illinois' Landowner Incentive Program coordinator, nominated Wiker for the pollinator award.

United States. His oldest book dates to 1634, and the collection includes a rare 1837 publication considered the first place a lot of the North American butterflies and moths were named.

To be a good entomologist Wiker claims you also have to be a good botanist.

"Only in the last 30 years have we started to understand how complex the insect-plant relationship is," he explained. "Because there is still so much we don't know about even the butterflies and moths of Illinois, I feel I can do so much more for the field by focusing my work here. After all, I can be anywhere in the state in four hours."

About 15 years ago, Wiker helped discover a new-to-science moth in southern Illinois, which will be included in the 124-volume series "Moths of North America and Mexico" scheduled for publication this year. As an honor to his work with this species, the moth will be tagged with a scientific name recognizing this dedicated entomologist.

It's a fact he proudly proclaims as his little piece of immortality.

For additional information on The North American Pollinator Protection Campaign and The Pollinator Partnership, visit www.pollinator.org.