

Pollinate

As humans, we rely on pollinators to produce about 1/3 of our food supply: bees, wasps, moths, butterflies, beetles, birds and bats. Bees are particularly good at it, since they need to find pollen to feed to their babies. At the moment the only bee used for commercial crops is the European honeybee, which of course is being devastated by the Varroa mite. But native bees are often more efficient at pollinating – some, like blue-banded and carpenter bees, have a technique called “buzz pollinating”, where they buzz at a particular frequency (like, say, middle C) to vibrate and open up the flower. Amazing! But native bees, like many species, are at risk from loss of habitat and our increasing use of insecticides. This piece is a kind of hymn to pollinators, especially the buzzing kind.

Sapphire, lapis, emerald and gold
glimmering, glinting, you shine and shimmer
from petal to petal, hitting
that pure vibration to open
the case of golden treasure.

Xylocopa, amegilla cingulata,
blue-girded and violet-winged, you dart and dip
and pack the pollen, prolific
in in endless energy, intent
on this one task.

As you gather food
for your most precious ones at home
do your five faceted eyes see the wider world
which your pollination also feeds?
Do you see those fields of flowers,
that firm-skinned fruit, those giant humans
spraying death on food and pollinator alike?

Or is it up to us – lumbering, low-pitched –
to look more closely, and listen
to your song
of pollination?