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**Leading Entomologist and Bee Expert Awarded Prestigious
2011 Tyler Environmental Prize**

**May Berenbaum, of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign,
joins a distinguished group of laureates for her groundbreaking work on the
science behind the bee population collapse and on the genetics of
coevolution between plants and insects**

Los Angeles, CA (22 March 2011) – One of the world’s leading entomologists and foremost experts on the evolutionary relationship between insects and plants, May R. Berenbaum, PhD, will receive the 2011 Tyler Prize for Environmental Achievement. Since its inception in 1973 as one of the world’s first international environmental awards, the Tyler Prize is the premier award for environmental science, environmental health and energy, given to those who confer great benefit upon humankind through environmental restoration and achievement.

“I’m absolutely humbled to receive the Tyler Prize,” said Berenbaum, the head of the entomology department at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. “All of my scientific heroes are Tyler Prize alumni.”

Previous laureates include Edward O. Wilson, recognized for his early work on the theory of island biogeography; Jane Goodall, selected for her seminal studies on the behavior and ecology of chimpanzees and her impact on wildlife awareness and environmental conservation; Jared Diamond, a renowned author who gave birth to the discipline of conservation biology; and Thomas Lovejoy, a central figure in alerting the world to the critical problem of dwindling tropical forests.

“Professor Berenbaum has done more to advance the field of entomology and explain its significance than nearly any other researcher today,” said Tyler Prize Executive Committee Chair Owen T. Lind, Professor of Biology, Baylor University. “Her expertise on bees and the causes behind declining bee populations has further positioned her as a leading resource for the media, policymakers and peers.”

The Tyler Prize, consisting of a \$200,000 cash prize and a gold medal, honors exceptional foresight and dedication in the environmental sciences—qualities that mirror the prescience of the Prize’s founders, John and Alice Tyler, who established it while the environmental debate was still in its infancy.

Coevolution

Berenbaum’s groundbreaking research in the field of chemical ecology has led to an understanding of the relationships between insects and the plants on a genetic level. Through a combination of genetic analysis and experimentation, Berenbaum has shown that plants evolve to create natural defenses, like chemical toxins to ward off pests, and

that insects in turn evolve to overcome these defenses. Understanding this coevolution, or “arms race,” between plants and insects has been fundamental to a better understanding of pesticide resistance, insects and genetically modified crops.

“Someone has got to stick up for the little guy,” said Berenbaum. “This world, this planet, would not function without insects. Our lives would be miserable without insects and people don’t realize that.”

The Decline of Bees

Berenbaum’s research has also been central to understanding the decline of bee populations in North America and around the world, known as Colony Collapse Disorder.

“Bees serve a unique role as partners to plants because they are pollinators and required for reproduction,” explains Berenbaum. “With roughly one third of the US diet dependent on one species of bee for pollination, it’s essential to understand what is happening to bees and correct course.”

As an author of numerous research studies and articles, and of six books for the general public, Berenbaum has long focused on engaging the public and increasing understanding of insects and the valuable role they play. Her most recent book, a cookbook called *Honey, I’m Homemade: Sweet Treats from the Beehive across the Centuries and around the World*, aims to inform people about the importance of bees in an interesting and engaging way.

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Lecture and Award Ceremony

On Thursday, April 14, at 2 p.m., Berenbaum will deliver a public lecture at the Davidson Conference Center of the University of Southern California, which administers the prize. This is open to the public.

And in a private ceremony, on Friday, April 15, at 7 p.m., the Tyler Prize Executive Committee and the international environmental community will honor Berenbaum at a banquet and ceremony at the Four Seasons Hotel in Beverly Hills.

About the Tyler Prize

The Tyler Prize for Environmental Achievement is one of the first international premier awards for environmental science, environmental health and energy.

It was established by the late John and Alice Tyler in 1973 and has been awarded annually to sixty-one individuals and four organizations associated with world-class environmental accomplishments. Recipients encompass the spectrum of environmental concerns including environmental policy, environmental health, air and water pollution, ecosystem disruption and loss of biodiversity, and energy resources.

For more information on the Tyler Prize and its recipients, go to:
<http://www.usc.edu/dept/LAS/tylerprize>