

Global insect decline is the result of wilful political failure. Good work on the ground means not all is lost.

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June 18, 2022

Abstract

1. The Millennium Ecosystem Assessment assessed ecosystem change, human well-being and scientific evidence for sustainable use of biological systems. Despite intergovernmental acknowledgement of the problem, global ecological decline has continued, including declines in insect biodiversity, which has received much media attention in recent years. 2. Several roadmaps to averting biological declines have failed, due to various economic and political factors, and so biodiversity loss continues, driven by several interacting human pressures. Humans are innately linked with nature but tend to take it for granted. The benefits we gain from the insect world are broad, yet aversion or phobias of invertebrates are common, and stand firmly in the path of their successful conservation. 3. Providing an integrated synthesis for policy teams, conservation NGOs, academic researchers and those interested in public engagement, this article considers: (1) the lack of progress to preserve and protect insects. (2) Examples relating to insect decline and contributions insects make to people worldwide, and consequently what we stand to lose. (3) How to engage the public, governmental organisations and researchers through “insect contributions to people” to better address insect declines. 4. International political will has consistently acknowledged the existence of biodiversity decline, but apart from a few narrow cases of charismatic megafauna, little meaningful change has been achieved. Public values are reflected in political willpower, the progress being made across the world changing views on insects in the public should initiate a much-needed political sea-change, but only if we as entomologists enormously expand our engagement efforts.

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