

# Roadmap developed to conserve global insect populations

Seventy-three scientists from around the world, led by Prof Jeff Harvey from the Netherlands Institute for Ecology, has come up with a roadmap for global insect conservation and recovery. The roadmap, which calls for action in the short-, medium- and long-term, was published recently in Nature Ecology & Evolution.



Image source: [Gallo/Getty](#)

Containing a list of immediate 'no regret' steps to conserve global insect populations, the roadmap includes, among others:

- Efforts to educate people about the important role of insects,
- Efforts to enhance restoration and conservation programmes,
- Efforts to phase out the use of pesticides,
- Efforts to reduce the import of ecologically harmful products,
- Efforts to avoid and mitigate the introduction of alien species and to increase landscape heterogeneity in agriculture.

In addition, large scale assessments of those species, areas and issues that need our attention should also be done.

## Addressing threats that impact insect communities

In the medium term, new studies should be conducted on different anthropogenic stressors and current data on past insect diversity in private museums and insect collections at universities should be analysed. Long-term actions include partnerships to restore, protect and create new habitats for insects and a global monitoring programme so that people can use the same methods to protect insects.

Commenting on the importance of the roadmap, co-contributor Dr James Baxter-Gilbert from SU's Centre for Invasion Biology (CIB) says: "This roadmap will help governments, researchers and conservationists to address threats that impact insect communities, and in so doing prevent the decline of insects globally." He and renowned insect expert Prof Michael Samways from SU's Department of Conservation Ecology and Entomology contributed to the development of the roadmap.

According to Baxter-Gilbert, it is in our best interest to conserve insects as they play an important role in maintaining ecosystems and sustaining functional food webs. "Without the insects, nature, as we know it, will be lost. Furthermore, insects are vital to human food production, with many species pollinating crops and acting as biological pest control."

"In the face of global biodiversity loss, conservation actions are needed more than ever. Yet, if we are to protect the typical conservation target species—the vertebrates, the fuzzy or feathery ones, all the individual favourite charismatic species each one of us has – then we must first protect the insects, since they shoulder the burden of so much of the ecological function that allows the rest of life to persist."

Baxter-Gilbert adds that the CIB's work on invasive plants and animals will no doubt help with insect conservation into the future.

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