



...WHY DO INSECTS EXIST?

THERE'S MORE THAN A MILLION INSECT-TYPES. AND THUS THEORETICALLY ALSO MORE THAN A MILLION ANSWERS.

BUT REALLY THIS QUESTION IS RATHER UNFAIR. MAYBE THE QUESTION SHOULD BE FORMULATED DIFFERENTLY: WHAT IF THERE WERE NO INSECTS ANYMORE? SCIENTISTS HAVE ASKED THEMSELVES THIS QUESTION, AND EVEN THOUGH OF COURSE PROGNOSIS VARIES, ONE POINT IS AGREED UPON BY ALL: HUMAN LIFE AS WE KNOW IT WOULD CEASE TO EXIST. ENTOMOLOGISTS GIVE HUMANS, AFTER THE HYPOTHETICAL EXTINCTION OF THE INVERTEBRATES (OF WHICH INSECTS FORM THE MAJORITY), ANOTHER 10 YEARS. HOWEVER FAST OUR DEMISE, A VANISHING OF THE INSECT-POPULATION WOULD IN ANY CASE HAVE DEVASTATING EFFECTS.

INSECTS ARE IMPORTANT, VITAL, FOR US, MAINLY FOR THEIR SERVICES, THE MOST APPARENT OF WHICH IS POLLINATION. PLANTS FALL BACK ON ANIMAL ASSISTANTS BECAUSE THEY CANNOT MOVE FREELY. INSECTS POLLINATE A VAST AMOUNT OF PLANTS, ESPECIALLY THOSE IMPORTANT FOR US; FRUIT-BEARING PLANTS AS WELL AS VEGETABLES AS WELL AS ONIONS, GARLIC AND CHILI, COFFEE, TEA, COCOA... THE SOY-BEAN DOESN'T REQUIRE POLLINATION, BUT VISITS BY BEES AND OTHER POLLINATORS INCREASE ITS FRUITBEARING ABILITIES AND RESISTANCY AND IMPROVES THE HARVEST.

AFTER OUR FOOD VANISHING OUR CLOTHING WOULD DISAPPEAR. THE MOST IMPORTANT NATURAL FIBRES WOULDN'T EXIST WITHOUT THE ADDING OF INSECTS. COTTONWOOL FOR EXAMPLE IS POLLINATED BY INSECTS.

IF INSECTS WERE TO PERISH, HUMANS WOULD HARDLY MISS THEM AS A SOURCE OF FOOD. HOWEVER, THE HUMAN INDEPENDENCE FROM INSECTS AS A FOOD-SOURCE IS AN EXCEPTION AMONG THE VERTEBRATES. MOST VERTEBRATES DEPEND ON INSECTS. FOR FRESHWATER FISH THEY CONSTITUTE A MAIN SOURCE OF FOOD; AMPHIBIANS NEED INSECTS; SMALLER REPTILES PREFER INSECTS; INSECTS AND THEIR RELATIVES COME UP FOR MORE THAN A THIRD OF THE FOOD-INTAKE OF FEATHERED GAME AND SONGBIRDS. THE LIST OF INSECT-DEVOURING MAMMALS IS LONG TOO...

INSECTS ARE ALSO THE MOST IMPORTANT RECYCLISTS ON OUR PLANET. WITHOUT THEM HEAPS OF DUNG, DEAD WOOD AND CARRION WOULD KEEP ON PILING UP. EARTH-BOUND INSECTS FERTILISE AND ENRICHEN THE SOIL WITH NUTRITIVE SUBSTANCES...

... AND WHY DO HUMANS EXIST?