

Scientists warn "insect apocalypse" is coming

17th November, 2019



Creative Commons 2.0
via Dalibor Stanisavljevic on flickr.com

Scientists say that global warming isn't the only serious threat to humans. Another major threat is the falling numbers of insects and the extinction of many species. Scientists say that half of all insects

worldwide have been declining since the 1970s. A new warning is that over 40 per cent of insect species could die out in our lifetime. Researchers said the number of insects is decreasing by 2.5 per cent every year. The scientists are calling it an "insect apocalypse". Many species of butterflies, bees and other bugs are now extinct. In the U.K. researchers say 23 bee and wasp species have gone extinct in the past century. Scientists say the apocalypse could trigger, "a catastrophic collapse of Earth's ecosystems".

Lead researcher Professor Dave Goulson said a lot of insects are being killed by pesticides used for farming and gardening. He said fewer numbers of insects might mean we cannot feed people. He told reporters: "Three quarters of our crops depend on insect pollinators. Crops will begin to fail. We won't have things like strawberries. We can't feed 7.5 billion people without insects." He said one of the most worrying trends is the decline of honeybees. In the USA, the number of honeybee colonies dropped from six million in 1947 to just 2.5 million in 2014. Professor Goulson warned people that: "We can't wait another 25 years before we do anything because it will be too late."

Sources: cnn.com / natureworldnews.com / businessinsider.com

Writing

It should be made illegal to kill insects. Discuss.

Chat

Talk about these words from the article.

scientists / global warming / threat / humans / extinction / species / century / Earth / researcher / pesticide / farming / gardening / crops / honeybee / trends / six million

True / False

- a) Scientists said insect extinction is a bigger threat than global warming. T / F
- b) A third of insects around the world have died since the 1970s. T / F
- c) The number of insects is decreasing at a rate of 2.5 per cent a year. T / F
- d) The article says there are only 23 species of bee left in the UK. T / F
- e) A professor said pesticides used on farms and gardens are killing insects. T / F
- f) The article said 75% of our crops depend on insect pollinators. T / F
- g) There are only 2.5 million honeybee colonies in the USA today. T / F
- h) A professor said it is too late to wait another 25 years to act. T / F

Synonym Match

(The words in **bold** are from the news article.)

- | | |
|------------------------|----------------|
| 1. threat | a. concerning |
| 2. extinction | b. falling |
| 3. worldwide | c. agriculture |
| 4. decreasing | d. dying out |
| 5. catastrophic | e. rely |
| 6. farming | f. hold on |
| 7. depend | g. danger |
| 8. worrying | h. fell |
| 9. dropped | i. globally |
| 10. wait | j. disastrous |

Discussion – Student A

- a) What do you think of an insect apocalypse?
- b) What are serious threats to humans?
- c) Would the earth be better without humans?
- d) What do you think of insects?
- e) What is your favourite insect and why?
- f) What is the danger of fewer insects?
- g) How big a threat is an insect apocalypse?
- h) How can we save our insects?

Phrase Match

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1. global warming isn't the only | a. killed by pesticides |
| 2. Another major threat is the | b. and other bugs |
| 3. insect species could die | c. trends |
| 4. species of butterflies, bees | d. falling numbers of insects |
| 5. a catastrophic collapse | e. colonies dropped |
| 6. a lot of insects are being | f. serious threat to humans |
| 7. Three quarters of our crops depend | g. before we do anything |
| 8. one of the most worrying | h. on insect pollinators |
| 9. the number of honeybee | i. of Earth's ecosystems |
| 10. We can't wait another 25 years | j. out in our lifetime |

Discussion – Student B

- What do you think about what you read?
- How can we use fewer pesticides?
- What can farmers do to help the insects?
- What happens when we cannot feed everyone?
- What do you think of strawberries?
- What can you do to help insects?
- Do you think it is too late?
- What questions would you like to ask the researchers?

Spelling

- the only serious hterat to humans
- eldnicing since the 1970s
- insect cepises could die out
- bugs are now tenixct
- could trigger a catastrophic llcaosp
- Earth's yosscetems
- insects are being killed by istcedipes
- Three quarters of our orcps
- feed 7.5 lbilion people
- one of the most worrying retdns
- the number of honeybee onolices
- Professor Goulson rawned people

Answers – Synonym Match

1. g	2. d	3. i	4. b	5. j
6. c	7. e	8. a	9. h	10. f

Role Play

Role A – Honeybees

You think honeybees are the best insects. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their insects. Also, tell the others which is the least useful of these (and why): ants, spiders or worms.

Role B – Ants

You think ants are the best insects. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their insects. Also, tell the others which is the least useful of these (and why): honeybees, spiders or worms.

Role C – Spiders

You think spiders are the best insects. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their insects. Also, tell the others which is the least useful of these (and why): ants, honeybees or worms.

Role D – Worms

You think worms are the best insects. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their insects. Also, tell the others which is the least useful of these (and why): ants, spiders or honeybees.

Speaking – Insects

Rank these with your partner. Put the best insects at the top. Change partners often and share your rankings.

- | | |
|---------------|------------------------|
| • ants | • spiders |
| • worms | • cockroaches |
| • butterflies | • ladybirds / ladybugs |
| • honeybees | • praying mantis |

Answers – True False

a	F	b	F	c	T	d	F	e	T	f	T	g	T	h	T
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---

Answers to Phrase Match and Spelling are in the text.