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Day 27 Greenest

In the last two years, scientists have shown that insects seem to be disappearing quickly in several countries in the western world. We have a surprising lack of reliable data about this. However, we know from several places now that in the last approx 30 years, 80% of insects seem to have vanished (both in terms of species and total body mass). This count was first established in Germany in 2017, but now similar data has been found in several other countries as well. This is highly frightening. Without insects, all of our ecosystems will falter. This is a catastrophe in the making that we only started to notice. I learned from the local entomologist at Indiana University, Dr Armin Moczek, that he suspects that there are basically two reasons for this mass extinction: use of chemicals and habitat destruction.

Use of chemicals and habitat destruction are both global and local events. What would happen if we could persuade many people to refrain from using dangerous chemicals such as insecticides and similar chemicals, and at the same time consider the habitats of insects in their yards?

Here is my idea: In the last couple of years I have watched how people have set up little libraries in their front yards (where people can take and add books). In my town, it was first just a few people who had these libraries, and now, suddenly, there are many of them throughout the town. Now, I propose creating a related concept with insect habitats. Similar to also bird houses, that people put in their yards, people could also put little insect homes in the yards that would be advertised like the little libraries in visible places in the yard.

How would one actually do this? After doing some research, I found that this concept exists in countries like Germany and Holland. Making these homes could be as simple as using an old bird house, which are very accessible. This concept would be paired with planting different plants that are of high relevance for insects; for example, where I live, there is a need for milkweed as a habitat for monarch caterpillars. The habitats could also use rotting wood, as it is a great place for many forms of insect life. These 'homes,' or habitats would create safe places for insects during the winter, would promote the growth of insect life, and could help boost garden health.

Now, to create a ripple effect, one would have to do this in a public way to spread the positive idea. This involves two things: first, creating a prototype that is visible in the yard, similar to the little libraries so that people see it and wonder what it is and then read the sign that says "Insect Home." Secondly, people need information about how to make these things. I would create a website and a flyer describing how to create an insect home and ideally provide people

with some seeds of desirable plants. To do this, I would consult with Dr. Moczek, with whom I have gone on many excursions.

In the future, I would hope that this becomes something seen in almost every house in my town and maybe even an idea shared throughout the country. Using the idea of a ripple effect, awareness of this issue would spread and people could become active in fighting this drastic decrease in insect populations. This project could boost me to become a young change maker in not only my community, but in the world. I will show people my age that anything is possible if you are passionate about it.

