Vanishing Pollinators

The Smithsonian Institution has a new exhibit at the National Zoological Park that highlights insect species that serve as pollinators and the global threat to their decline. *Vanishing Pollinators* is an educational art exhibit that alerts us to a worldwide decline in pollinator populations. This portfolio of 34 stunning color photographs portrays the beauty and grace of flowering plants and their threatened insect pollinators in an attempt to unite the energy of one of nature’s most important biological systems with the power of visual art.

Bees and other pollinators enable many plants to reproduce and give us some of the foods we eat every day. If animal pollinators disappeared, a vital link in our own life support system would also disappear. Today there is a global threat to many of the creatures that provide this indispensable service to our ecosystem.

For this exhibition, biologist and photographer Carll Goodpasture uses his camera as a hand lens to explore the intricate world of pollinators bringing to life the hidden interrelationship between plants and the animals they rely on for reproduction. In the process, he also sheds light on the role humans play in this relationship.

A synthesis of art and science, this exhibition is both a visual statement about man’s interaction with the environment and a bold reminder of a world we rely upon but often neglect.

This exhibition of digital fine-art photography features two interactive computer programs “What Are Flowers For?” and “From Flower to Apple”; a video on pollination biology; and reference books for visitors of all ages.

*Vanishing Pollinators* will be on view through April 2001 at the Amazonia Science Gallery and the Visitors Center at the National Zoological Park in Washington, DC. The exhibit is sponsored by National Zoological Park, Smithsonian Institution, Thomas K. and Katherine Reed Charitable Fund, Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and Smithsonian Institution Travelling Exhibition Service (SITES). Following that, it will go on national tour, sponsored by SITES. An on-line tour of the exhibition is also available at http://www.si.edu/pollinators/.

Eco-Friendly Travel to the Galapagos Islands

Responding to eco-minded tourists who want to visit the Galapagos Islands without damaging the world-famous park, the Corporation for Conservation and Development (CCD), an Ecuadorian conservation group, teamed with the Rainforest Alliance to give a green seal of approval to tour boats that tread lightly on the vibrant but fragile ecosystem. The new SmartVoyager® certification program will minimize the impact of tour boats in the Galapagos Islands. Each year, 60,000 visitors travel from island to island on specially equipped tour boats, which also serve as floating hotels. Working with scientists, conservation experts, tour operators and others, CCD has outlined standards for the maintenance and operation of the tour boats. Tour companies that wish to participate invite a team of specialists aboard their boats to evaluate the vessels according to the guidelines.
The standards cover potential sources of pollution, such as wastewater and fuels, and set rules for the management of everything from the docks to the small craft that ferry visitors ashore. Procurement and supply management guidelines are designed to minimize the chances of introducing alien wildlife species to the area. The standards require good living conditions and advanced training for the boat crew and guides. Passengers must be given maximum opportunity to appreciate the beauty of the islands and close encounters with wildlife while leaving no trace of their visit.

The Galapagos archipelago, located 960 west of mainland Ecuador, is a world-renowned biodiversity hotspot and one of the best places on Earth to see evolution in action. The islands enchant visitors with their stark beauty and wildlife, including sea lions, seals, blue-footed boobies and the famous giant tortoises. Even though all the islands and the waters around them are a national park, land continues to be cleared for farming and tourism-related development, and the waters are being overfished. Species that had been abundant on the islands, such as giant tortoises, are now endangered due to hunting. The biggest threat is the introduction of exotic species by people, disrupting the delicate web of life on the islands and devastating the defenseless native species and habitats.

For more information on the SmartVoyager® program, visit the Rainforest Alliance webpage at http://www.rainforest-alliance.org.

**INFORMATION HIGHWAY HI-LITES**

The online National Library for the Environment <http://www.cnie.org> includes many free resources, including 692 objective, nonpartisan, technically accurate reports produced by the Congressional Research Service. New reports highlighting endangered species and natural resources include (1) “Endangered Species: Continuing Controversy”, (2) “The Arctic National Wildlife Refuge: The Next Chapter”, (3) “Conserving Land Resources: The Clinton Administration Initiatives and Legislative Action” and (4) “Wetlands Issues”. The National Library for the Environment is sponsored by The National Council for Science and the Environment (NCSE). NCSE works to improve the scientific basis for environmental decision-making. Guided by the needs of stakeholders, NCSE educates society about the importance of comprehensive scientific programs that integrate crosscutting research with knowledge assessments, education, information dissemination, and training. NCSE is a nonprofit organization that carries out educational activities and limited advocacy work. The work of NCSE is funded by private and corporate foundations, universities, members of the CNIE Associates Program and individuals.

Dr. David Wake, Curator of the Museum of Vertebrate Zoology at the University of California-Berkeley, and several graduate students have launched AmphibiaWeb <http://elib.cs.berkeley.edu/aw/>, an online database of amphibian biology and conservation. The searchable database currently contains 137 species accounts and eventually will provide information “for every species of amphibian in the world.” Species accounts include species descriptions, photos, life history information, conservation status information, and literature references. Although the new resource is still under development, more than 100 species are already photo-illustrated, and over 300 species have range maps; the reference list contains in excess of 500 literature references. In addition to the database, the site offers a section on worldwide amphibian declines and information on how to contribute information to the database.

Launched by the British Mycological Society, the Fungus 2000 Database <http://194.131.255.3/bmspages/Fungus2000/Fungus2000.htm> was established “to record at least 2000 species of fungi from the British Isles in the year 2000 and, equally as important, to produce a millennium collection of one dried voucher specimen for each species recorded.” The Fungus 2000 Database provides details on the first collections of species made during the year 2000, listed in alphabetical order (scientific name only). Each data entry describes the species name (scientific name only), associated organism(s), location of specimen, date of collection, reference data, and (in some cases) a distribution map for the species. As of May 2000, nearly 800 specimens have been included in the database.

CURRENT LITERATURE


Fairfax, R.J., and Fensham, R.J. 2000. The effect of exotic pasture development on floristic diversity in central Queensland,


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