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Hans-Dietrich Reckhaus

Why Every Fly Counts

A Documentation about the Value
and Endangerment of Insects

 Springer

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The cover picture shows a fly of the species *Musca domestica* on an Insect Respect compensation area.
Photo: © Jelena Gernert

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Foreword

Insects! And then flies. Who really needs them? In our tidy world, we only want to see insects flying around that are either likable (ladybugs) or beautiful (butterflies). And please, only those that do not pose a risk. Of course, we also like bees—probably because honey is so sweet and we know that without bees, we would hardly have any fruit or vegetables.

The most common conflicts between humans and insects occur in the agricultural sector. Usually, there is also a third subject at stake: our crops and livestock. Unfortunately, these conflicts have been and are still being solved with chemicals. You just spray some poison—and presto, all of the pests are lying on their backs. It seems to be so simple since the insecticide DDT was invented—and later, other much worse variations with progressively stronger poisons. The question arises: Why can't we always use the same poison? It must be cheaper than always developing and marketing new products. But insects are tricky! They can also evade these poisons or endure the chemical shower, so that each time, at least a few of them continue on living happily. And thus, they continue causing damage in agriculture, annoying people or infecting them with disease.

There is still a lack of observation. And in particular, there is a lack of learning from nature. We have deeply altered nature: We intrude deep into areas where the insects are kings. We transform entire landscapes to be able to produce twice as much cheap, generally nutrient-poor food with lots of chemicals—and then, we waste half of it. This human behavior affects all insects—both beneficials and pests. Instead of investigating the system and finding out how it could be optimized without chemicals or how it could be restructured, we simply take the easy and quick way out. The consequences of these actions are left for the next generations.

We need more systematic thinking, more understanding that everything is connected, and that interferences such as insecticides against plant pests are extremely temporary solutions. We are then not trying to understand the causes for the pest infestation; rather we are simply treating the symptoms. It works well for a little while. But the revenge of these small organisms is mighty and swift. There are many very good examples today that other ways do work. Our organic farmers do

achieve high yields and good quality. They do not battle against nature; rather they know how to make use of her support.

Particularly since the public does tend to shy away from insects—lots of people even have phobias—it was high time for such a book about insects. A book that explains that without these small six-legged creatures (insects; spiders have eight legs), humans would not survive for long. How long would it take? Experts are still debating this. But it actually does not matter. The main point is: We simply cannot survive without them.

Dr. Hans-Dietrich Reckhaus has understood that the insects are an essential part of our biosphere. If we sometimes do have to protect ourselves against damage and plagues, we should do so in an environmentally sound manner. We will all fare better in the future if we promote beneficials proactively, and also in a broader sense, ecosystems with the services they provide. This exceptional and entertaining book contains countless very exciting and scientifically based examples as well as good reasons to look for nature-compatible alternatives for dealing with insects.

Zurich, Switzerland

Dr. Hans Rudolf Herren
winner of the Right Livelihood Award
("Alternative Nobel Prize") in 2013 and of the World Food
Prize in 1995; President of the Biovision Foundation (Zurich)
and Millennium Institute (Washington)

Why Every Exchange Counts

Five years ago, I reflected on the value of insects for the first time. Frank and Patrik Riklin confronted me as a biocide manufacturer with the question: “What is the actual value of a fly?” The two artists hit me like a bolt, and I will always be grateful to them for this. I put our insect control products into question and started to explore the usefulness of insects as well as the threat that they pose.

As a trained economist, my understanding of entomological relationships often reached its limits. Fortunately, I was able to ask biologist Stephan Liersch, a long-term colleague of mine, for advice. I am very grateful that he took the time to go through my notes meticulously and point out numerous errors in the script.

I was also not capable of submitting the manuscript in a book version all by myself. As an editor, the sustainability specialist Tina Teucher not only formed the language in the text, but also she compiled all of the pictures and checked the notes for consistency. She also came up with the wonderful title for the book and the conclusion in Chap. 4. Thanks to her extensive research work on a multitude of details, she was also able to find numerous errors. Thank you very much for the superb collaboration.

Without my wife Julianne, the book would have been much more fragmented. I am grateful to her for motivating me to take more time for the topic and for the numerous linguistic corrections.

Special thanks go to Dr. Hans Rudolf Herren for the impressive foreword. I really appreciate the support provided by Hans Herren and his Biovision Foundation for ecological development.

I would also like to thank my brother Arne Kraeft as well as all the staff members in Bielefeld and Gais, especially Silvia Oertle. They took care of the company when I was busy.

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About the Author

Dr. Hans-Dietrich Reckhaus pursued his studies in business administration at the University of St. Gallen, which he completed in 1993 by receiving his Dr. oec. He has headed Reckhaus company since 1995 in the second generation as the executive manager. The Reckhaus enterprise looks back on 60 years of specialization in the development and manufacturing of insect control products. With the quality seal “Insect Respect” launched in 2012, Reckhaus strives for sustainable transformation in his sector. He was awarded the German Visionary Prize for this in 2014 and the Swiss Ethics Prize in 2015. This globally unique compensation model was triggered by a dialog with the Swiss conceptual artists Frank and Patrik Riklin. They initiated the counter-movement “saving, not killing” and in 2012, implemented the “Saving flies” action together with Hans-Dietrich Reckhaus. The entrepreneur regularly gives lectures and publishes about issues regarding SME leadership and sustainability. He is married and father to three children.

The Quality Seal

Insect Respect is the label for a new understanding in our treatment of insects. It is the world's first quality seal for control-neutral insect protection that guarantees compensation: the damage caused by a biocide is calculated based on a scientific model. "Insect-friendly habitats" are then created as compensation areas to help re-establish the balance, and at the same time, to promote biodiversity in sealed housing areas. From the Insect Respect philosophy derive the following guiding principles for insect control in houses:

1. Reduce: Create awareness for the value of insects and thus less and only specific insect control.
2. Improve ecologically: Insecticide-free solutions with preferably environmentally friendly components.
3. Compensate: When insect control appears to be indicated, insect friendly compensation areas are created.

Imprint

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