

Accepted Manuscript

Title: Insects as a piece of the puzzle to mitigate global problems: an opportunity for ecologists.

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PII: S1439-1791(17)30023-3
DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.baae.2017.09.009>
Reference: BAAE 51062

To appear in:

Received date: 30-1-2017
Revised date: 18-7-2017
Accepted date: 8-9-2017

Please cite this article as: {<http://dx.doi.org/>

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OPINION PAPER

Insects as a piece of the puzzle to mitigate global problems: an opportunity for ecologists.

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Abstract: Although scientists have studied and touted the importance of insects to many ecosystem services for decades, insects and insect science are often poorly perceived by the public and by policy makers. Because insects do have important influences on many ecosystem services, they have even greater potential to be used to solve some anthropogenically-caused current global problems. We give several examples where insects are currently being used, or are being considered for future use, as a part of the solution to a global problem, including their potential roles as a part of the solution to sustainable fuel and food systems, deforestation and other environmental degradation, and global inequities.

Ecologists have an important role to play in assessing how many of the proposed uses of insects will alter ecological processes and ecosystem services, or how their use may be effectively implemented.

Keywords: ecosystem services; global change; biofuels; entomophagy; ecotourism; climate change

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