
Place of invertebrates in individuals' minds and hearts

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Abstract

Invertebrates are everywhere: they represent 95 % of the world's animal diversity, and being linked to every ecosystem function, they have key roles in biodiversity resilience. However, are we conscious about this? Do we value such diversity? Therefore, it is important to investigate how to "show" this animal diversity, through words or pictures, to elicit a positive attitude for biodiversity, which may sustain protective behaviors. In this presentation we have focused on students' perceptions in a French University, who are representative of the society, as more than 80% of a class age has access to University in France. Two studies have been carried out, the first one focusing on what student think about what is animal diversity, the second one on how students "feel" diversity.

Through study 1, we demonstrate that what students think as "animal diversity" is more likely to be a list of more or less well-shaped vertebrate fauna dominated by domestic mammals and birds. Insects are a mix of invertebrates with an overall negative perception. Moreover, sympathy for invertebrates was correlated to the "quality of the human environment" of the person only: being surrounded by influent persons (parents, best friends) actively involved in nature conservation increase awareness of insect diversity, insect knowledge and positive perception of the group.

Through study 2, we focused on a relatively unknown invertebrate group of species living in the soil: Springtails. French university students were invited to evaluate their feelings while watching a series of pictures, each showing one species of Springtails. This study enabled us to identify what are the visual cues that induce positive emotions and those that induce negative ones.

Through both studies, we highlight the importance of invertebrates' perception studies as a crucial question to develop useful conservation tools.

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