

Loss of the Small, Yet Brilliant, Stars

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I believe that most, if not all of us, have a variety of anecdotes involving insects. Whether it's a ginormous spider we saw at a young age or being swarmed by wasps after kicking a soccer ball into their hive. When I was younger, after a long summer's day of helping my father outside with our garden we'd always be greeted with a swarm of fireflies. We have a rather large backyard so it made sense how often we'd encounter them. I was always enamored by their beauty at a young age, but being a seven-year-old, you're afraid of just about anything that flies or crawls on you, so I only admired them from a distance.

Recent research suggests that as much as 45% of the bug population has declined over the past few decades. Of course there are many issues impacting this, some of which involve pesticides, habitat loss and most prominently, climate change. It suddenly made a lot of sense as to why there hadn't been *any* fireflies in our backyard anymore. Regardless, we should view this as a wake up call to our present situation. The bug population is considered a vital link within the food chain and if we continue to let this 45% increase, we could see disastrous consequences in the near future.

Though not all hope is lost, as there are now many worldwide conservational efforts to protect these declining populations. Groups such as the Firefly Atlas involve simple ways of helping track the firefly population by letting community members add observations or reports of fireflies in their local area. Knowing that there is still time to contribute and help positively impact our planet is key in motivating ourselves and others to work.

Photo: <https://unsplash.com/photos/green-leafed-plant-TY0wQIAdMQA> by Tony Phan