

The Pillars of the Ecosystem: A Guide to the World of Insects

Our planet is sustained by a very delicate balance. Much of this balance depends on tiny creatures that often go unnoticed. Let's discover the three fundamental groups that allow life to regenerate: Pollinators, Sap-feeders, and Detritivores.

1. Pollinators: The Messengers of Life

Pollinators transport pollen from the anthers (male part) to the stigma (female part) of flowers. This process is vital for the reproduction of over 80% of wild plants and food crops.

- **Main Species:** Honeybees, bumblebees, butterflies, hoverflies, and hummingbirds.
- **Why they are important:** Without them, most of the fruits and vegetables we eat would disappear.

2. Sap-Feeders: The Resource Extractors

These insects are equipped with piercing-sucking mouthparts. They can feed on plant sap or, in some cases, animal fluids. Although some are considered pests, they play a key role in the food chain as prey for birds and spiders.

- **Main Species:** Aphids (plant lice), cicadas, true bugs, and mosquitoes.
- **Did you know?** Many sap-feeders, like cicadas, spend most of their lives underground feeding on roots before emerging for their brief adult life.

3. Detritivores: Earth's Scavengers

Detritivores are nature's recyclers. They feed on decomposing organic matter, such as dry leaves, rotten wood, and animal remains, turning them into simple nutrients that make the soil fertile.

- **Main Species:** Earthworms, woodlice (isopods), millipedes, and dung beetles.
- **Ecological Role:** They close the cycle of matter. Without them, forests would be buried under meters of plant debris that would never decompose.

Summary Table

| Group | Diet | Environmental Role |
|--------------|----------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Pollinators | Nectar and Pollen | Production of seeds and fruits |
| Sap-Feeders | Sap and organic fluids | Biological control / Prey feeding |
| Detritivores | Dead matter (leaves, wood) | Formation of fertile soil (Humus) |

How to Protect Them

- **Avoid pesticides:** Chemicals indiscriminately kill even useful species.
- **Plant native flowers:** Provide food for pollinators in every season.
- **Leave a "wild" corner:** A little dry wood and leaves in a corner of the garden offer shelter to detritivores.