

INSECTS

FRIENDS OR FOES

Omkar



Bombyx mori

Image credit: Pxhere

INSECTS are the most diverse group of organisms with over a million described species; their diversity and adaptability have allowed them to thrive in a wide range of environments, almost every environment on earth, from deserts to grasslands to rainforests, lakes, ponds, rivers and streams. Marine insects are relatively rare, less diverse and less abundant. Some insects, like certain species of beetles and flies, are found in coastal areas. Their occurrence and distribution are largely regulated by the availability of food, habitat and climate conditions.

Insects exist in a wide range of sizes and are incredibly diverse, with new species still being described. They vary greatly in size from tiny fairyfly (0.2mm) to large Goliath beetle (11cm). The largest insects are stick insects, beetles and certain species of moths and butterflies.

Feeding Habits

Insects exhibit various types of complex feeding habits, which are not fully understood. Early evolution of insect feeding evolved to feed on decaying organic matter, like detritus (Detritivory). Some insects may have evolved to feed on fungi, which were abundant in early ecosystems (Fungivory). Some insects are likely to feed on plant sap, which provides a nutrient-rich food source. As plants evolved, insects adapted to feed on leaves, stems and other plant tissues (Herbivory). Some insects evolved to feed on the bodies of other animals (Carnivory), like the parasitoid wasp (Parasitism). Insects evolved to prey on other insects, likely as a response to competition for food resources (Predation). Some insects evolved specialised feeding structures and behaviours to exploit specific food sources, like nectar and pollen.