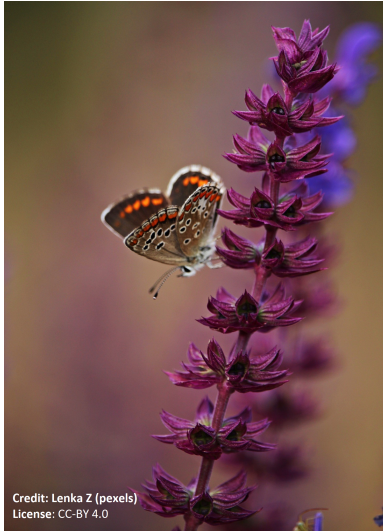# Call for taxonomists & citizen scientists!

Recruiting participants to the first European Red List of insect taxonomists

The 'Red List of Taxonomists' initiative, funded by the European Union, launches its registration portal and calls for professionals and citizen scientists to register on. The purpose is to build a database of European taxonomic experts in the study of insects. The analysis of these data will elucidate the trends in available expertise and inform policy-makers on how to secure the future of taxonomy as a basis for protecting European biodiversity and beyond.

Credit: Lenka Z (pexels)
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The 'Red List of Taxonomists' initiative, funded by the European Union, launches its registration portal, where professionals and citizen scientists are called to register on. The purpose is to build a database of European taxonomy experts in the field of entomology, the biological discipline dedicated to insects. The analysis of these data will elucidate the trends in available expertise, thereby forming the basis of key recommendations for policy makers to further allocate necessary efforts and funds to support taxonomists' work and contribute to protecting European biodiversity and beyond.

The health of European pollinators on species and population level and other insects essential in our ecosystems strongly relies on our ability to rapidly turn the growing awareness about these worrying trends into swift, decisive actions. These decisions are crucial to mitigate the negative impacts of these alarming trends in human activities, mainly industrial agriculture. Taxonomists - the people who can identify, discover and monitor insect species - have a decisive role to play.

Often specialised in specific insect groups, they can investigate the diversity and abundance of insects. To a great concern, the numbers of trained insect taxonomists seem also to be fast declining. There is the real danger of losing numerous species before we get the chance to even learn about their existence!

On a more positive note, while species extinction is an irreversible event, certain taxonomic expertise can be nourished and 'brought back to life' if only we have the data and analyses to bring to the attention of the relevant education institutions, governments and policy-makers, so that the necessary resources are allocated to education, training, career support and recognition.

This is how the 'Red List of Taxonomists' project, an initiative by the organisation uniting the most important and largest European natural science collections (CETAF), the world's authority on assessing the risk of extinction of organisms: the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and the scientific publisher with a long history in the biodiversity and ecology fields: Pensoft, and funded by the European Commission, comes into play. Launched earlier this year, the 'Red List of Taxonomists' aims to compile the very first inventory of taxonomic expertise for any group of organisms, understandably choosing the class of insects.

Bringing together scientists, research institutions and learned societies from across Europe, the project will compare the trends and extract recommendations to overcome the risks, while preserving and further evolving the expert capacity of this scientific community.

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As partners of the project, CETAF and IUCN are mobilising experts from their respective networks to populate the 'Red List of Taxonomists' database. In parallel, Pensoft is extracting further data of authors, reviewers and editors from taxonomic publications across its portfolio of academic journals and books, in addition to major relevant databases working with scholarly literature.

To reach experts, including professionals not necessarily affiliated with partnering institutions, as well as citizen scientists, the team is now calling for European taxonomists to register via the newly launched 'Red List of Taxonomists' portal and provide their data by filling a short survey. Their data will not be publicly available, but it will be used for in-depth analyses and reports in the concluding stage of the project, scheduled for early 2022. The collection of the data is in full compliance with GDPR requirements.

Insects play a significant role in the functioning of healthy ecosystems and human well-being. By providing vital services such as pollination, matter decomposition, and bio-control, they greatly influence the living world. Therefore, our ability and expertise to recognize insect species and biodiversity is fundamental for their conservation.

Through this large scale initiative the European Commission aims to assess the available taxonomic expertise on insects across Europe. More detailed assessments at Member State level will also be done for selected taxa of particular importance, such as pollinators.

The Red List of Insect Taxonomists is a call for collective action to the community of experts: bring your expertise into scope and give your contribution to preserving insect life.

The **Red List of Insect Taxonomists** project will provide:

- Detailed information on the current number, location and profile of insect taxonomists.
- Assessment of the status and future trends of insect taxonomic expertise.
- Recommendations for strengthening the taxonomic expertise in Europe.
- Communication materials designed to improve the understanding among policy makers, stakeholders and the general public of the role of a solid European taxonomic community in tackling the decline of insects.

Participate

Bombus fragrans (Pallas, 1771)   Illustration by Denitsa Peneva

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Insect taxonomists, both professional and citizen scientists, are welcome to register on the Red List of Taxonomists portal at: red-list-taxonomists.eu and further disseminate the registration portal to fellow taxonomists!

Follow and join the conversation on Twitter using the #RedListTaxonomists hashtag.

More information about the project can be found here.