

Study finds flies are key to pollination

March 25 2015



Flies play an important role as pollinators and should no longer be neglected in pollination studies, according to a new study led by University of Bristol researchers, published in the *Proceedings of the Royal Society B*.

Bees, [hoverflies](#) and butterflies are insects frequently studied as [pollinators](#) in agricultural and conservation research. Until now, flies other than hoverflies (non-syrphid Diptera) have been assumed to be unimportant and are often neglected in these types of studies.

New research, funded by NERC (the Natural Environment Research Council) from academics at Bristol's School of Biological Sciences, has found no significant difference in pollen-loads between hoverflies and the non-syrphid Diptera in an analysis of 30 pollen-transport and 71 pollinator-visitation networks.

Using data taken from 33 UK farms, the researchers estimated that non-syrphid Diptera carry around 84 per cent of the total pollen carried by all farmland flies.

Katy Orford, the study's lead researcher in the School of Biological Sciences, said: "As important pollinators, such as bees, have suffered serious declines, this study is important because it suggests flies could potentially provide insurance against the loss of the ecosystem service of pollination. Future studies should explore other stages of the pollination process, beyond pollen transport, to further determine the role of the non-Syrphid Diptera as pollinators."

More information: "The forgotten flies: the importance of non-syrphid Diptera as pollinators." [DOI: 10.1098/rspb.2014.2934](https://doi.org/10.1098/rspb.2014.2934)

Provided by University of Bristol

Citation: Study finds flies are key to pollination (2015, March 25) retrieved 18 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2015-03-flies-key-pollination.html>

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