Intriguing Insects

Interactions among living things within an ecosystem help to ensure the survival of each type of organism. The population of different organisms within an ecosystem sometimes indicates the health of that ecosystem. Unfortunately, humans do not always appreciate just how important or significant a contribution some of these organisms make. For example, we may not be aware of the roles insects play in ecosystems.

Consider the following facts:
- Ants account for 10 percent of the total mass of all animal life forms on Earth.
- A queen termite can produce almost half a billion offspring in its lifetime.
- There are about 300 000 species of beetles, approximately 20 000 types of grasshoppers and crickets, and almost 5000 kinds of dragonflies on Earth.
- Insects make up approximately 85 percent of all animal life forms on Earth. Other invertebrates make up a further 12.5 percent of animal life forms, and vertebrates account for the remaining 2.5 percent.

Purpose

To describe the role of an insect species in an ecosystem

Procedure

1. Choose one insect species. Research the role of this insect in its ecosystem, and then identify a different organism with which your chosen insect has a biotic relationship. Begin your research at the links for page 41 at *ScienceSource*.
2. Plan the best way to illustrate the information about your chosen insect, its role in the ecosystem, and its relationship to the other organism you identified. Consider using a computer slide show presentation program or creating a video presentation.
3. E-mail your work to a partner, and revise it based on his or her feedback.
4. Finalize your presentation and share it with your class.

Questions

5. Why did you choose the insect you did?
6. What was the most interesting thing you learned about this insect's role in its ecosystem?
7. What was one thing you learned about the other organism that you didn't know before completing this project?