

Taxonomists? Who needs them?

Tim Entwistle

1 Taxonomists — people who earn their living from naming and classifying life — might seem dispensable. With 9m of the 11m or so living organisms on Earth yet to be catalogued they still have some work to do, but in an economically rationalised world this may not be seen as a huge priority.



2 39, having someone who can distinguish between the different mites that infect honeybees has already saved \$66m through better targeted biosecurity and management. Similarly, being able to detect early and accurately potential weed and pest species is worth many millions of dollars to farmers and park managers.

3 There is a clear and urgent need for taxonomy, and the taxonomists who do it. Which is why we should all be interested in a debate raging in the scientific arena around whether worldwide our taxonomic effort is increasing or decreasing. In Australia, we know we are losing taxonomists at the rate of two to three per year, and the workforce is definitely ageing. Worldwide, we are inarguably well shy of the effort needed to catalogue Earth.

4 It's been estimated that to discover and describe all species would take 300,000 taxonomists some 1,200 years, at a cost of more than \$350bn. And this is a conservative estimate.

5 If we are to direct our limited resources into conserving the most important parts of our biological diversity, how do we know which species and systems are the most important? Taxonomy.

6 As a community, we need to support taxonomy and its practitioners — if not to make our life better, then because our life depends on it.

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Tekst 10 Taxonomists? Who needs them?

- 1p 39 Which of the following fits the gap in paragraph 2?
- A After all
 - B As a result
 - C Furthermore
 - D In other words
 - E On the other hand
- 1p 40 Which of the following statements is in line with Tim Entwistle's letter?
- A In Australia taxonomists themselves are actively involved in trying to stimulate interest among young people.
 - B So far, taxonomy has proven to be a rather archaic field of study.
 - C Taxonomists have valuable knowledge benefiting the agricultural sector and nature preservation.
 - D The taxonomist community is making every effort to preserve as many species as possible.

Bronvermelding

Een opsomming van de in dit examen gebruikte bronnen, zoals teksten en afbeeldingen, is te vinden in het bij dit examen behorende correctievoorschrift, dat na afloop van het examen wordt gepubliceerd.