

Grasshoppers and gaps: Approaches to strengthen New Zealand insect conservation

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Conservation of threatened insects is close to the hearts of many New Zealand entomologists. Unfortunately, few of us have the time or resources to take the action we might like to promote the exceptional qualities and importance of insects to the wider community, or reverse the declines in our globally unique and fascinating insect fauna. In an attempt to turn my passion for insects and conservation into action, without re-inventing the wheel, I have visited and collaborated with international conservationists to learn from their work and adapt their skills and knowledge to New Zealand problems. This has included visits to France, Germany and Australia to learn about captive rearing, research, and management programs for species including the endangered Crau plain grasshopper and the Lord Howe stick insect. Here I discuss some of the insights these conservation programmes provide, the benefits of international collaborations for New Zealand threatened insect research, and some of the gaps we need to bridge in order to make real conservation gains. In particular, how can we build on the exciting initiatives many ecologists and entomologists are already taking as individuals, and use them to strengthen insect conservation at a national level?

