

## **They Make Up 97% of Animal Species on Earth. One U.S. Nonprofit Has Spent 30 Years Fighting for Them.**

### **Butterfly Pavilion Emerges as Global Leader for the World's Unsung Heroes: Invertebrates**

**WESTMINSTER, CO – July 14, 2025** – They pollinate our food, sustain our ecosystems, recycle our nutrients, and support every breath we take—and yet most people don't know they exist.

Invertebrates, animals without backbones like bees, butterflies, beetles, corals, and spiders, make up 97% of all animal species on Earth. Despite their overwhelming importance, these creatures remain understudied, misunderstood, and vastly under protected.

Now, on the heels of what scientists are calling a global "insect apocalypse," a quiet but powerful force in Colorado is emerging on the national stage.

Meet Butterfly Pavilion, a nonprofit organization and the world's first Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA)-accredited standalone nonprofit invertebrate zoo, based in Westminster, Colorado, today celebrates 30 years as a global leader in the fight to protect and conserve invertebrates. From groundbreaking research and international conservation efforts to policy influence and public education, Butterfly Pavilion has become the world's prominent champion for nature's most overlooked species.

"We are a nonprofit fighting for the smallest animals with the biggest impact," said Ryan Welch, President and CEO of Butterfly Pavilion. "Invertebrates are essential to life on Earth, yet they're in crisis, and so is everything that depends on them. Our job is to make sure no one can ignore them anymore."

#### **Why Invertebrates Matter to Everyone, Everywhere**

Invertebrates are responsible for pollinating over 85% of flowering plants and 75% of the world's food crops. They create soil, clean water, maintain biodiversity, and form the base of nearly every food web. They also contribute more than \$500 billion annually to global food production through pollination services alone.

Yet habitat destruction, climate change, pesticides, and pollution are causing unprecedented population declines worldwide - threatening everything from food security to climate resilience.

"The collapse of invertebrate populations is one of the most overlooked environmental crises of our time," said Dr. Rich Reading, Vice President of Science and Conservation. "These animals are the bedrock of ecosystems and human survival, yet they're disappearing before we've even discovered many of them. At Butterfly Pavilion, we're not just studying invertebrates, we're fighting to save the life-support systems of the planet."

Without invertebrates, ecosystems collapse. And without organizations like Butterfly Pavilion, the fight to save them might not exist.

## 30 Years of Global Leadership in Invertebrate Conservation

Since opening its doors in 1995, Butterfly Pavilion has built a reputation as a leading voice for invertebrates in the zoo and conservation world, with projects spanning six continents and scientific partnerships that have redefined how we protect these critical animals. Projects are made possible with support through donations, sponsorships, grants, and zoo visitation.

### Butterfly Pavilion's Global Impact Includes:

- **Conservation:** Restored thousands of acres of habitat for pollinators, monarchs, tarantulas, and more across North America, Asia, and Africa.
- **Scientific Research:** Partnered with Colorado State University to launch an unprecedented invertebrate research initiative addressing pollinator health, soil science, and sustainable agriculture.
- **Policy Leadership:** Advocated for and helped pass Colorado legislation in 2024 formally recognizing invertebrates as wildlife.
- **Public Engagement:** Reached more than one million students through immersive education programs and trained hundreds of community scientists to monitor butterfly populations and restore habitats.

Butterfly Pavilion also spearheads international projects like Bees for Elephants in Tanzania (reducing human-wildlife conflict), safeguarding the monarch migration in partnership with the government of Mexico, butterfly farming in Indonesia to provide on-the-ground conservation resources and reduce wild harvesting, and firefly rearing and breeding in its lab in Colorado.

### Colorado Invertebrate Day: A Model for National Action

As a testament to Butterfly Pavilion's leadership, Colorado Governor Jared Polis has proclaimed July 14, 2025, as Colorado Invertebrate Day, one of the first statewide recognitions of the role invertebrates play in ecosystem and human survival.

While symbolic, this proclamation is part of a larger movement which Butterfly Pavilion hopes to spark—encouraging all communities, states, and countries to recognize invertebrates as critical wildlife, worthy of research, funding, protection, and public attention.

"Invertebrates don't have a voice. But Butterfly Pavilion is their microphone," said Welch. "We need more leaders, more funders, more educators, and more champions to join this fight before it's too late."

### A Call to Action: Support the Work That Supports the World

Butterfly Pavilion's work is made possible through community support, donations, sponsorships, and partnerships - not just in Colorado, but across the globe. This 30th anniversary isn't just a celebration of the past—it's a rallying cry for the future.

To support Butterfly Pavilion or learn how to get involved, visit [www.butterflies.org](http://www.butterflies.org).

## **About Butterfly Pavilion**

Butterfly Pavilion, located in Westminster, Colorado, is the world's first Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) – accredited nonprofit, stand-alone invertebrate zoo and a globally recognized leader in invertebrate research, conservation, and education. Celebrating its 30th anniversary in 2025, Butterfly Pavilion has served as a critical hub for engaging communities, advancing science, and promoting the protection of invertebrates—animals such as bees, butterflies, spiders, beetles, and coral that are foundational to all ecosystems and essential to life on Earth. [www.butterflies.org](http://www.butterflies.org)