

Understanding the impact of urbanization on the ecology and diversity of insect pollinators for a better biodiversity management in tropical ecosystems

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Abstract

Across the world, there is an increased urban expansion leading to the disappearance of ecosystems and disruption of ecological balances. Very little is known about the effects of the transformation of rural landscapes in urban areas on fauna of many African ecosystems. The main objective of the study was to assess the impact of urbanization on insects playing an important role in plant pollination. The case of Bujumbura urbanization, the main town of Burundi, was taken as a model. We collected insect pollinators and their host-plants in two sites located in an urban area and a peri-urban area, respectively. Student paired tests were performed to compare the abundance of the pollinators between the two landscapes. The specific richness of insect pollinators was higher in the peri-urban area than in the urban environment. The preference of the peri-urban area by pollinators could, probably, result from its high richness in plants which may provide them food sources, reproductive sites, and a favorable microclimate. Our research also confirmed that urbanization contributes to the restructuring of local assemblages, with emergence of taxa adapted to the new environment. Understanding the ecological adaptation of pollinators in ecosystems subjected to human transformation may serve as a guide to integrating the management of specific taxa and their habitats, especially in urbanization planning.

Keywords: *Pollination, Biodiversity, Urbanization, Host-plant, Ecosystem.*

Résumé

Partout dans le monde, on assiste à une expansion urbaine accrue entraînant la disparition des écosystèmes et la perturbation des équilibres écologiques. On sait très peu sur les effets de la transformation des paysages ruraux en zones urbaines sur la faune de nombreux écosystèmes africains. L'objectif principal de l'étude était d'évaluer l'impact de l'urbanisation sur les insectes jouant un rôle important dans la pollinisation des plantes. Le cas de l'urbanisation de Bujumbura, la capitale du Burundi, a été pris pour modèle. Nous avons collecté des insectes pollinisateurs et leurs plantes-hôtes dans deux sites situés respectivement en zone urbaine et en zone périurbaine de Bujumbura. Des tests de Student appariés ont été effectués pour comparer l'abondance des pollinisateurs dans les deux paysages. La richesse spécifique des insectes pollinisateurs était plus élevée en zone périurbaine qu'en milieu urbain. La préférence de la zone périurbaine par les pollinisateurs pourrait, probablement, résulter de la grande richesse de ce milieu en plantes pouvant leur fournir des sources de nourriture, des sites de reproduction et un microclimat favorable. Nos recherches ont également confirmé que l'urbanisation contribue à la restructuration des assemblages locaux, avec l'émergence de taxons adaptés au nouvel environnement. Comprendre l'adaptation écologique des pollinisateurs dans les écosystèmes soumis à la transformation humaine peut servir de guide pour intégrer la gestion de taxons spécifiques et de leurs habitats, en particulier dans la planification de l'urbanisation.

Mots clés: *Pollinisation, Biodiversité, Urbanisation, Plante-hôte, Ecosystème.*

1. Introduction

There is a complementarity of ecosystem components, particularly interactions between animal and plant species (Chagnon M., 2008). For instance, by foraging from one flower to another, bees provide a very important service to plants, the pollination (Michener D.C., 2007). Plants benefit from the transport of pollen by bees and in return, the bees benefit from the nectar and pollen. This symbiosis ensures the reproduction and genetic diversity necessary for the evolution of plants, while for insects, the collection of nectar and pollen is essential for their nutrition (Michener D.C., 2007; Rhoné F. *et al.*, 2016; Tooker J.F. *et al.*, 2002). Insufficient pollination is responsible of the decrease in the fruit set rate (transformation of the ovary into fruit), and the fruit deformation or their drop before maturity (Nzigidahera B. & Fofa A., 2010). Nevertheless, farmers and researchers are concerned about the decline of pollinators in ecosystems around the world, linked especially to fragmentation and loss of habitats, use of pesticides, invasive species and light pollution (Potts S.G. *et al.*, 2010). The fragmentation and loss of habitats are the main factors in biodiversity disappearance, especially in tropical Africa where biodiversity hot spots are being encroached upon by fast-growing cities (Guenat S. *et al.*, 2008). Artificialization and pollution which become more intense in cities harm biodiversity in general and insect pollinators in particular, which lose their food resources as well as their breeding sites (Lemoine G., 2016). The transformation of rural landscapes for urbanization, intensifying road networks and creating industrial zones have resulted in the disappearance of many biotopes and the disruption of ecological balances, particularly between plants and pollinators (Pouvreau A., 1993). Few data on pollinators of some forest and agricultural ecosystems of Burundi have already been provided by Nzigidahera B. & Fofa A. (2010), Ndayikeza L. *et al.* (2014a, b) and Pauly A. *et al.* (2015). However, very little is known on the local urban pollinators and the effects of actual urbanization on the ecology and diversity of this group. According to the projections, Burundi had an urbanization level of 13% in 2018 that will increase to 27.9% in 2050 (United Nations, 2019). This fast rising demography undoubtedly has repercussions on the structure of the biodiversity of the landscape matrix.

The general objective of the study was to assess the impact of the expansion of the Bujumbura city on pollinator populations to contribute to the safeguard of this biodiversity of capital importance within ecosystems. Concretely, in the study area, the specific objectives of this work were to (i) identify the species of insect pollinators and (ii) identify the plants potentially host to pollinators in the study area.

The results of this study will contribute to improving the database on pollinators of Burundi. They could particularly serve as a guide for the local authority in urban planning by integrating conservation of pollinators, organisms playing a key role in the life and functioning of ecosystems.

2. Material and methods

2.1. Study area

Sampling took place in Bujumbura (3°22'32"S, 29°21'33"E), the capital of Burundi, in the western of the country. It extends on 127 km², on the shores of Lake Tanganyika, and administratively subdivided into three communes: Muha, Mukaza, and Ntahangwa. According to the national censuses of 1979, 1990 and 2008, the Bujumbura population strongly increased with respectively 168.368; 235.440 and 497.166 inhabitants. Current projections estimate that this population could reach 3.8 million inhabitants by 2050 (ISTEEBU, 2017).

Local climate is characterized by an average annual precipitation of 800 to 1300 mm, with temperatures varying between 23 and 25°C (Bigirimana *et al.*, 2012).

2.2. Sampling design and procedure

Two pollinating insect sampling sites were chosen in the study area:

- (1) Site 1 (3°22'28"S, 29°21'37"E) located within the National Institute of Public Health (INSP, Burundi) in an urban landscape in the Mukaza commune. The vegetation is mainly representing by fruit trees including avocado trees (*Persea Americana.*), citrus fruits, guava trees (*Psidium guajava*), mango trees (*Mangifera indica*) and ornamental plants such as *Moltinga* sp. and *Lantana camara* L. The grassy layer is largely dominated by Acanthaceae, Poaceae (*Brachilaria* sp.), Cyperaceae and Asteraceae (*Bidens pilosa*).
- (2) Site 2 (3°21'58" S, 29°24'24"E) situated in a peri-urban landscape in Ntahangwa commune. The vegetation is dominated by herbaceous plants, as well as trees and shrubs like the Lamiaceae (*Ocimum gratissimum*), Fabaceae and Asteraceae (*Bidens pilosa*, *Tithonia diversifolia*), Myrthaceae (*Eucaruptus*), Euphorbiaceae (*Manihot esculenta*), Poaceae (*Hyparrhenia*), Rutaceae (*Citrus*), Rosaceae (*Rubus* sp.), Clasiaceae and Anacardiaceae.

At each sampling site, insect pollinators were sampled using two complementary methods. First, thirty bacs (traps)

colored in yellow and filled with water mixed with detergent were placed along a 60 m transect, with 2 m between two consecutive traps. To better understanding the diversity of pollinators and their potential host plants, the insects visiting plants were collected using an entomological net. The use of the entomological net and/or Malaise trap to capture insects is recommended (Durand O. & Coutanceau J.-P., 2015). Thanks to the entomological net method, Kra K.D. et al. (2017) collected a greater number of beetles compared to the use of yellow traps and Barber traps (pitfalls). Moreover, some taxa, particularly the Megachilidae family, are exclusively captured by net because large individuals are able to visualize passive traps (Aguib S., 2014). Sampling took place twice a week, from November 2019 to January 2020. The plant and insect specimens were respectively placed in paper for the herbarium and in tubes containing 80% ethanol for future identification in the lab. Insect specimens were identified microscopically using Picker M. et al. (2004), Marshall S.A. (2006), Eardley C. et al. (2010), Ekesi S. & Billah M.K. (2010) and (Marshall S.A. et al., 2017); while the identification of plants potentially host to pollinators was carried out using Troupin G. (1978, 1983, 1985, 1988). Identifications were pursued to the species level whenever possible; otherwise samples were assigned to morphospecies.

2.3. Data analysis

The specific richness and diversity of insect pollinators present in the study area were described with classical diversity indices (Magurran A.E., 1988, 2004): (1°) Chao 1; (2°) Shannon's (eH, where $H = \sum p_i \ln(p_i)$) and (3°) Simpson's ($1/D$, where $D = \sum p_i^2$), where p_i is the proportion of the individuals of species i in the sample; and (4°) Jaccard ($J=a/a+b+c$) where a is the total number of species present in both samples, b the number of species present only in sample 1, and c the number of species present only in sample 2. Rarefaction curves and diversity indices were calculated with EstimateS v.9.1.0 (Colwell R.K., 2013). We performed Student paired tests to compare the abundance of the insect pollinators recorded in the two study sites. The statistical analyses were carried out using the R version 4.0.2 (R Development Core Team, 2020).

3. Results

3.1. Richness and diversity of insect pollinators in study sites

We recorded a total of 4658 specimens of insect pollinators, representing 40 families, 7 genera and 162 species in the two study sites. None of the two rarefaction curves did not

approach a veritable asymptote. Sampling of additional traps might be necessary before a plateau is reached for any site (Fig. 1).

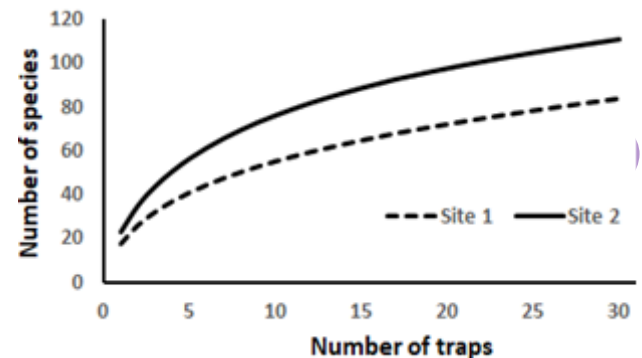


Figure 1. Rarefaction curves for insect pollinators in the two sampling sites

Two orders, *Diptera* and *Hymenoptera*, were the most abundant at the two sampling sites. Seven orders (*Diptera*: 83.28%, *Hymenoptera*: 14.22%, *Coleoptera*: 1.93%, *Lepidoptera*: 0.34%, *Hemiptera*: 0.11%, *Orthoptera* and *Isoptera*: 0.06%) and six orders (*Diptera*: 78.72%, *Hymenoptera*: 18.90%, *Hemiptera*: 1.10%, *Coleoptera*: 0.66%, *Orthoptera*: 0.48%, *Lepidoptera*: 0.28%) were respectively identified at site 1 and site 2. At the family level, 28 and 35 families were identified at site 1 and site 2, respectively, and the Sarcophagidae, Calliphoridae, Apidae, Halictidae and Muscidae were most abundant. Halictidae and Apidae were particularly more abundant at site 1 and site 2, respectively. Few Syrphidae were observed at the two study sites. Moreover, the Megachilidae, Lycidae, Arctiidae and Coccinellidae, Nabidae and Silphidae were exclusively collected using the entomological net. Of the 162 species identified during the study, 67 were common to the two sites, 69 specific to site 1 and 26 specific to site 2. The species Dolichopodidae sp.1, Dolichopodidae sp.2, Calliphoridae sp.4 and Lipotriches sp.3 dominated at site 1 while Calliphoridae sp.1, Sarcophagidae sp.1, Sarcophagidae sp.3, *Apis mellifera* L., Sarcophagidae sp.2, Calliphoridae sp.7 dominated at site 2 (Table S1-2). Overall, it was noted that the median specific richness of the insect pollinators was higher in the site 2 than in site 1, with 23 and 18 species, respectively. Student paired tests confirmed significant differences in specific richness between the two sites ($t=5.61$, $df=58$, $P<0.001$). Nevertheless, the specific diversity is almost the same for the two sites but they showed a weak similarity in species composition (Table 1, Fig.2).

Table 1. Estimated (Chao 1) species richness and diversity statistics for the two study sites.

Site	Chao 1	Shannon	Simpson	Jaccard
Site 1	120	2.93	0.91	0.41
Site 2	149	2.86	0.88	

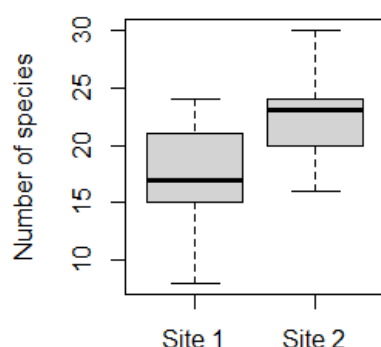


Figure 2. Boxplots showing the median number of species (heavy horizontal lines in the boxes) of insect pollinators in sampling sites. The upper and lower edges of the boxes represent the first and third quartiles.

3.2. Interaction plants – insect pollinators in the study sites

Thirty species of insect potentially pollinating plants were collected from the two study sites. Five species were only observed at site 1 versus 12 species at site 2. In addition, of all pollinators recorded, the honeybee, *Apis mellifera*, seemed to be more active at the study sites. It was observed on 13 plant species at site 2 versus 6 at site 1, respectively. Other abundant species were *Ceratina* sp.2, *Ceratina* sp.3, *Lipotriches hylaoides*, *Lipotriches* sp.4, Chrysomelidae sp.6, *Toxomerus floralis*, *Fabricius Eristaloides quinquelineatus*, *Eritalinus* sp., Muscidae sp.10, *Paragus borbonicus* and Rhinophoridae sp.1. Twenty-nine plant species visited by insect pollinators were observed in the two study sites, with 10 species at site 1 against 17 at site 2. *Ocimum gratissimum*, *Stylosanthes biflora* and *Stachytarpheta jamaicensis* were particularly more attractive to insect pollinators, with respectively 13; 11 and 9 species. Also, five to seven species of insect pollinators were recorded on *Stachytarpheta jamaicensis*, *Sesamum angustifolium*, *Killinga bulbosa*, *Bidens elliotii* and *Psidium guajava*.

4. Discussion

4.1. Richness and diversity of insect pollinators in study sites

One hundred and sixty-two species of insect pollinators spread over 40 families and seven orders were recorded in the study area. *Diptera* and *Hymenoptera* were particularly more abundant. In general, *Diptera*, *Hymenoptera*, *Coleoptera* and *Lepidoptera* are naturally better represented in ecosystems and they are also among the main pollinators in the world (Desaegher J., 2017; Das B.J. *et al.*, 2018). Predominance of *Diptera* in pollinating insects was also noted by Chloé P. *et al.* (2017) in Martinican fruit agroecosystems. The families of Sarcophagidae, Calliphoridae, Apidae, Halictidae and Muscidae were more abundant in both study sites. The abundance of Sarcophagidae and Calliphoridae in our study area could be particularly explained by their ecology requiring an open and warm environment favorable to spawning (Marshall S.A., 2006). In addition, some of their species are indicators of urban habitats (Fremdt H. & Amendt J., 2014). Moreover,

species of those families are predominantly domestic (Charabidze D., 2012). Halictidae were more represented at site 1 when Apidae dominated at site 2. Ropars L. *et al.* (2018) also noted an abundance of Halictidae during a study on the diversity of bees from the Paris city. These bees prefer well-sunny habitats and nest on the ground (Vereecken N. *et al.*, 2009). They therefore have positive affinities to urbanization unlike the Apidae (Desaegher J., 2017). Few Syrphidae were recorded at the two sampling sites. This result corroborates that of Sinzinkayo E. *et al.* (2016) who noted a low abundance of this family in a biotope of Bujumbura city. Without a variety of food sources, bees and hoverflies do not find the quantity of nectar and pollen necessary for their physiological functioning (Michener D.C., 2007). The site 2 displayed a high specific richness of insect pollinators compared to the site 1. Indeed, the site 2 sheltered many species plants compared to the site 1, and this is favorable to the establishment of several pollinators, especially wild bees (Somme L. *et al.*, 2011). The results of our study therefore highlight that the creation of new quarters and other infrastructures in our study area have favored the restructuring of the local pollinator communities with emergence of taxa adapted to the new environment.

4.2. Relation plants - pollinators in study sites

The peri-urban landscape was more diversified in plant species than the urban environment. Plant diversification influences the structure of pollinator communities (Lichtenberg *et al.*, 2017). This area was dominated by fallow lands and crop fields, compared to the urban landscape located in zone with impermeable surfaces (roads, buildings, etc.) that implies a specific floristic composition. This observation corroborates the result of Bossu A. *et al.* (2014) during their research on pollinators in two areas of France. The result of our study suggests that the unavailability of floral resources in the urban environment would have led pollinators to migrate to the nearby rural lands. Flower diversity particularly attracts communities of hoverflies and bees (Warzecha D. *et al.*, 2018). Moreover, the high intensity of artificial light in cities would affect the physiology of plants, in particular their flowering and fruit development with implications for faunal diversity (Briggs W.R. & Christie J.M., 2002), especially pollinators whose visit frequency would therefore be low due to the insufficiency of plants able of providing the necessary food resources (Le Féon V., 2010). In general, urban infrastructures, especially the height of the buildings, would impede pollinator dispersion (Kevin J.G., 2010). The present study revealed that three plant species, *Ocimum gratissimum*, *Stylosanthes biflora* and *Tithonia diversifolia* (only observed in the peri-urban area), and *Stachytarpheta jamaicensis* (founded in the urban area) seemed to be more attractive to foraging insects. This would be linked to their production of nectar and pollen needed by pollinators for their own survival and that of their offspring (Habakaramo M.P. *et al.*, 2015). The high attraction of insects by essential oils produced by *O. gratissimum* was reported by Yarou

B.B. (2018) who identified 52 families of insects on this plant. Also, attraction of *Stylosanthes biflora* to pollinators has been reported by Daniels J.C. et al. (2014) in Florida. Moreover, Abdullahi G. et al. (2011) found that *T. diversifolia* was among the plants most visited by bees in Mubi region in the Sudanese savannah of Nigeria. The attracting potential of *T. diversifolia* to insect pollinators was also observed by Donatti-Ricalde M.G. et al. (2018) in Rio de Janeiro. Also, Lakshmi P.V. & Raju A.J.S. (2011), Ballantyne G. & Willmer P. (2012) and Pieris P.U.S. (2016) have noted a great attraction of *S. jamaicensis* to butterflies and bees. Honey bee, *Apis mellifera*, was the most active of all insect foragers observed in the study sites. Ndayikeza L. et al. (2014b) also observed that this species visited a wide range of plants compared to other foragers in natural and agricultural ecosystems in Burundi. The results of our study confirm that urbanization may contribute to the loss of plants playing an important role in pollination. Specific measures for conservation and management of pollinator habitats should be taken during urbanization planning.

5. Conclusion

The results of this study confirmed that urbanization conducted to restructuring of plant and pollinator communities. In particular, urbanization contributes to emergence of insect taxa characteristic of urban landscapes, such as the families of Sarcophagidae and Calliphoridae, whereas the peri-urban zone seems to attract the families of Syrphidae and Apidae. The specific richness of pollinating insects is higher in peri-urban areas than in urban areas, probably due to the availability of food resources, nesting sites and a favorable microclimate. Furthermore, the presence of plants more attractive to pollinators and of medicinal importance such as *O. gratissimum*, *S. biflora*, *Tithonia diversifolia* and *S. jamaicensis* in peri-urban environment suggests that particular measures for conservation of some plant species should be taken, especially through the creation of urban gardens, when elaborating urbanization plans.

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Supplementary information

Table S1. Abundance of families of insect pollinators in the sampling sites (with at least ten individuals, NI: number of individuals, RA: relative abundance)

Families	Site 1		Site 2	
	NI	RA (%)	NI	RA (%)
Sarcophagidae	593	33.73	1116	38.47
Calliphoridae	417	23.72	747	25.75
Apidae	84	4.78	390	13.45
Muscidae	30	1.71	129	4.45
Dolichopodidae	268	15.24	76	2.62
Anthomyiidae	46	2.62	55	1.90
Sphecidae	12	0.68	49	1.69
Syrphidae	32	1.82	44	1.52
Tachnidae	4	0.23	40	1.38
Ichneumonidae	15	0.85	37	1.28
Diopsidae	20	1.14	35	1.21
Halictidae	87	4.95	24	0.83
Cicadellidae	1	0.06	19	0.66
Vespidae	15	0.85	18	0.62
Chrysomelidae	29	1.65	13	0.45
Stratiomyidae	47	2.67	13	0.45
Acrididae	1	0.06	11	0.38
Tenthredinidae	29	1.65	8	0.28

Table S2. Abundance of species of insect pollinators in the sampling sites (with at least twenty-five individuals, NI: number of individuals, RA: relative abundance)

Species	Site 1		Site 2	
	NI	RA (%)	NI	RA (%)
Calliphoridae sp.1	191	10.86	534	18.41
Sarcophagidae sp.1	278	15.81	519	17.90
Sarcophagidae sp.3	191	10.86	315	10.86
<i>Apis mellifera</i>	38	2.16	292	10.07
Sarcophagidae sp.2	90	5.12	221	7.62
Calliphoridae sp.7	94	5.35	115	3.97
Dolichopodidae sp.2	202	11.49	47	1.62
Muscidae sp.1	6	0.34	44	1.52
Muscidae sp.7	4	0.23	44	1.52
<i>Neominto celeris</i>	4	0.23	40	1.38
Calliphoridae sp.3	33	1.88	34	1.17
<i>Ceratina</i> sp.1	21	1.19	34	1.17
<i>Ceratina</i> sp.2	9	0.51	30	1.03
Dolichopodidae sp.1	66	3.75	29	1.00
Sarcophagidae sp.5	2	0.11	29	1.00
Calliphoridae sp.6	0	0.00	25	0.86
<i>Eutrichota</i> sp.	41	2.33	19	0.66
Sarcophagidae sp.7	32	1.82	18	0.62
Calliphoridae sp.4	86	4.89	8	0.28
<i>Lipotriches</i> sp.3	33	1.88	6	0.21
Stratiomyidae sp.1	27	1.54	6	0.21