

The diversity of insects in polyculture farms, Palangka Raya, Central Kalimantan, Indonesia

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Abstract: Polyculture farming is an agricultural practice of growing several types of crops on the same land. The sustainability of polyculture farming is influenced by the presence of insects, both ecologically beneficial and detrimental. In agricultural ecology, insects have an important role as pollinators, predators, and pests that significantly affect the health of agricultural crops, including in polyculture farms. As an effort for sustainable polyculture management, especially in pest control, an exploratory study with mixed methods was conducted to determine the diversity, distribution, and categories of insects based on their ecological roles. This study was conducted in an agricultural area with a polyculture system in Palangka Raya, Central Kalimantan, Indonesia. A total of 12 insect species were identified from polyculture farms belonging to the orders Coleoptera, Diptera, Hemiptera, Lepidoptera, and Hymenoptera. The diversity of insects found in polyculture farming in this study was categorized into low diversity with a Shannon-Wiener index (H') of 2.186. Hemiptera is known to be the most abundant with 7 species identified. Based on the number of individuals, *Comptonotus japonicus* is the most abundant species with 9 individuals. The structure of the insect community based on their ecological role in polyculture farming consisted of 58.33% insect pests, 33.33% predatory insects, and 8.33% pollinating insects.

Keywords: Agricultural management, ecology, insects, peatlands, polyculture

Abstrak: Pertanian polikultur adalah praktik pertanian di mana beberapa jenis tanaman ditanam di lahan yang sama. Keberlanjutan pertanian polikultur juga dipengaruhi oleh keberadaan serangga, baik yang secara ekologis menguntungkan maupun merugikan. Dalam ekologi pertanian, serangga memiliki peran penting sebagai polinator, predator, dan hama yang secara signifikan berpengaruh terhadap kesehatan tanaman pertanian, termasuk di pertanian polikultur. Sebagai upaya pengelolaan pertanian polikultur berkelanjutan, khususnya dalam mengontrol hama, penelitian eksploratif dengan *mixed method* ini dilakukan untuk mengetahui keanekaragaman, sebaran, dan kategori serangga berdasarkan peran ekologisnya. Penelitian ini dilakukan di lahan pertanian dengan sistem polikultur di Palangka Raya, Kalimantan Tengah, Indonesia. Sebanyak 12 spesies serangga diidentifikasi dari pertanian polikultur yang termasuk dalam ordo Coleoptera, Diptera, Hemiptera, Lepidoptera, dan Hymenoptera. Keanekaragaman serangga yang ditemukan pada pertanian polikultur pada penelitian ini termasuk dalam keanekaragaman rendah dengan indeks Shannon-Wiener (H') sebesar 2,186. Hemiptera diketahui paling melimpah dengan 7 spesies yang teridentifikasi. Berdasarkan jumlah individunya, *Comptonotus japonicus* merupakan spesies yang paling melimpah dengan 9 individu. Struktur komunitas serangga berdasarkan peran ekologisnya di lahan pertanian polikultur terdiri dari 58,33% serangga hama, 33,33% serangga predator, dan 8,33% serangga pollinator.

Kata kunci: Manajemen pertanian, ekologi, serangga, lahan gambut, polikultur

INTRODUCTION

Polyculture farming is an agricultural practice of growing several types of crops on the same land. A polyculture is a form of alternative agricultural intensification program that is appropriate for obtaining optimal crop yields. The advantage of the polyculture cropping pattern is the frequency of harvesting more than once a year, maintaining soil fertility (Vandermeer, 1998; Weißhuhn et al., 2017), and providing year-round ground cover thereby reducing erosion rates (Prasetyo et al., 2009). The polyculture system is a cropping pattern that can support sustainable agriculture because a variety of crops are planted on the same land and at the same time can increase land efficiency and productivity.

The sustainability of polyculture farming is influenced by the presence of insects, both ecologically beneficial and detrimental. In agricultural ecology, insects have an important role as pollinators, predators, and pests that significantly affect the health of agricultural crops, including in polyculture. According to Warman and Kristiana (2018), factors that influence the success of the polyculture cropping pattern are spacing, selection of varieties, and the presence of insects. Insect pests are one of the factors that cause less than optimal yields. They significantly damage agricultural products intended for human food and animal feed. In addition, these biotic agents cause indirect damage by leaving contaminants such as body or exoskeleton fragments, eggs, and bad odors in the product (García-Lara & Saldivar, 2016; Keshavareddy & Kumar, 2016; Mylonas et al., 2020).

About 20-30 out of a total of more than six million insect species are important pests for major agricultural crops (García-Lara & Saldivar, 2016). The presence of insect pests that damage agricultural production forces farmers to apply pesticides excessively by ignoring beneficial insects on agricultural land (Hidrayani et al., 2014). Understanding the biology and behavior of insect pests and the types of damage they cause is key to proper insect pest management for sustainable agriculture (García-Lara & Saldivar, 2016; Hagstrum & Subramanyam, 2006).

Most of the land in Palangka Raya, Central Kalimantan, Indonesia, is peatland which is less than ideal for agricultural land, so farmers need to convert the land to make it suitable for planting. The polyculture system is the choice of farmers in this area to overcome the excessive conversion of peatlands (Melhanah et al., 2020), considering the importance of peatlands as the largest carbon storage for the ecosystem (Beaulne et al., 2021; Cobb et al., 2020; Dunn & Freeman, 2011). Preliminary exploration indicated the presence of various insect species on plants in polyculture farms in Palangka Raya, Central Kalimantan, Indonesia, some of which were suspected to be insect pests due to some damage to the crop parts in the presence of these insects. Mahmood-ur-Rahman et al. (2014) stated that the presence of insect pests is the main source of biotic stress on crops. This is a challenge in managing sustainable agricultural land with a polyculture system.

As an effort for sustainable polyculture management in Palangka Raya, Central Kalimantan, Indonesia, especially in controlling pests, an exploratory study with mixed methods was conducted to determine the diversity, distribution, and categories of insects based on their ecological roles.

METHOD

Study site and sample collection

This study is an exploratory study with mixed methods that combines and integrates qualitative and quantitative approaches to collect and analyze data related to insect community structure in polyculture farms. This study was conducted on a polyculture farm in Palangka Raya, Central Kalimantan, Indonesia, which was planted with 3 crop types, namely Maize (*Zea mays*), Asparagus Bean (*Vigna unguiculata* ssp. *sesquipedalis*), and Eggplant (*Solanum melongena*) (Figure 1). Insect samples were collected by active sampling method directly from crops in polyculture farms, then stored in sample bottles filled with alcohol.



Figure 1. Study site: Polyculture farms, Palangka Raya, Central Kalimantan, Indonesia (Map Source: QGis)

Insect identification

Insect specimens collected were then observed for their morphological characteristics. The results of observations are used as the basis for the taxonomic identification of insect species. Several previously published works are used as a guide at the identification stage, e.g., Borror & DeLong (1971) and Borror & White (1998). The parameters used in observing the morphological characteristics of insect specimens are the head, antennae, wings, legs, body color, and size of insects (Table 1).

Table 1. Morphological characteristics observation parameters

No.	Morphological Characteristic Parameters	Descriptions
1	Head	texture, head type, and mouth type
2	Antennae	antenna segment and type
3	Wings	color, texture, and shape
4	Legs	number of segments and types of limbs
5	Body Coloration	Coloration patterns of the insect body
6	Size	Body Length

Data analysis

The data analysis method used in this study includes qualitative and quantitative analysis. Qualitative analysis was carried out on the results of the morphological observation to describe the characteristics of each insect specimen. Quantitative analysis was carried out on the data of the number of species and individuals to determine the level of insect diversity using the following formula of the Shannon-Wiener Diversity Index (H'):

$$H' = - \sum_{i=1}^s p_i \ln p_i \quad (1)$$

(Ortiz-Burgos, 2016)

Annotation(s):

H' = Shannon-Wiener Diversity Index

s = Number of Species

p_i = proportion of individuals belonging to the i^{th} species

$\ln$ = Natural Logarithm

Table 2. Classification scheme of Shannon-Wiener diversity index

No.	H'	Relative Value
1	> 3.50	Very High
2	3.00 – 3.49	High
3	2.50 – 2.99	Moderate
4	2.00 – 2.49	Low
5	< 1.99	Very Low

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Species composition and diversity

A total of 12 insect species were identified from polyculture farms belonging to the orders Coleoptera, Diptera, Hemiptera, Lepidoptera, and Hymenoptera as presented in

Figure 2, and Figure 3. Hemiptera is known to be the most abundant with 7 species identified. Based on the number of individuals, *Componotus japonicus* (Formicidae, Hymenoptera) is the most abundant species with 9 individuals followed by *Brachyplatys subaeneus* (Plataspidae, Hemiptera) with 8 individuals.

Componotus japonicus is an ant species in the family Formicidae, commonly known as the Japanese carpenter ant. *C. japonicus* lives in monogynous or polygynous colonies with a large number of individuals consisting of about 3000 worker ants (Akre et al., 1994; Changlu et al., 1991). The worker ants of *C. japonicus* are found in symbiosis with aphids on crops in polyculture farms to collect honeydew (Guénard & Dunn, 2012). This behavior of forming large colonies and foraging behavior is thought to be the main factor influencing *C. japonicus* to become the most abundant species. Insect species that occur with low abundance were also observed in this study consisting of only one individual consisting of 3 species belonging to the order Hemiptera (e.g., *Bothrogonia addita*, *Cosmolestes picticeps*, and *Euthochtha galeator*) and 1 species belonging to the order Coleoptera (*Harmonia axyridis*).

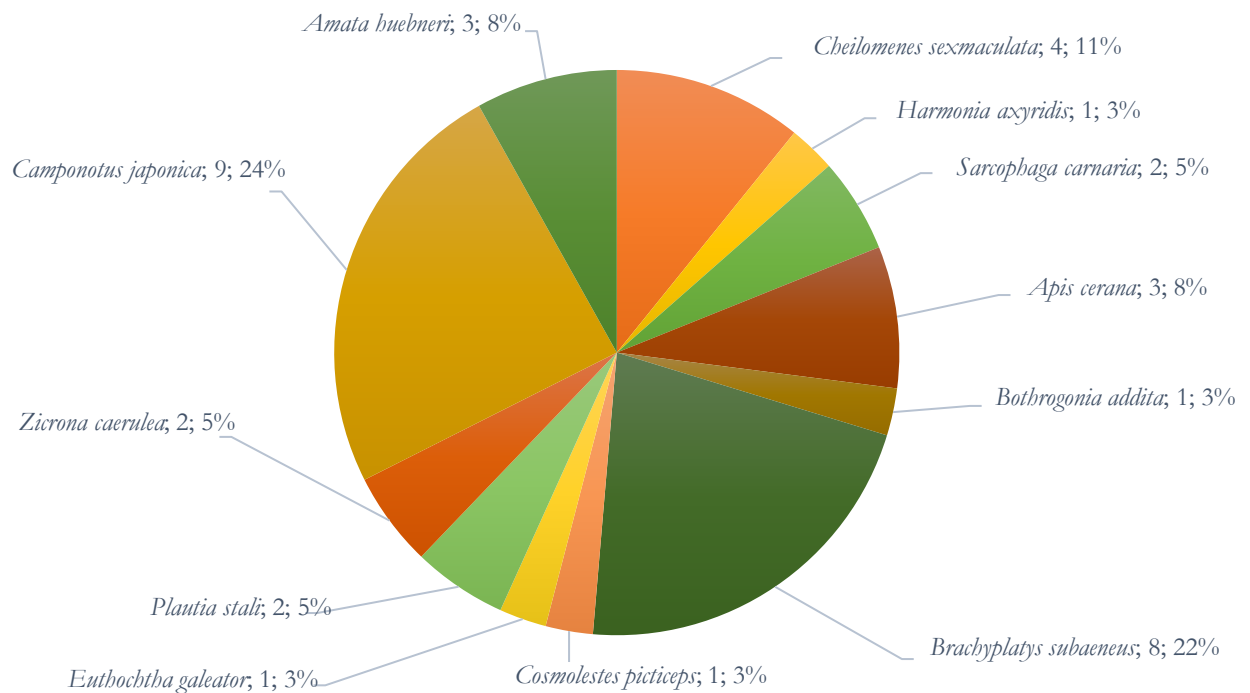


Figure 2. Insect Species Composition of Polyculture Farms



Figure 3. (a) *Bothrogonia addita*; (b) *Plantia stali*; (c) *Brachyplatys subaeneus*; (d) *Cosmolestes picticeps*; (e) *Eutbochtha galeator*; (f) *Componotus japonica*; (g) *Cheilomenes sexmaculata*; (h) *Harmonia axyridis*; (i) *Amata huebneri*; (j) *Apis cerana*; (k) *Sarcophaga carnaria*; (l) *Zicrona caerulea*

Insect diversity found in polyculture farming in this study was categorized into low diversity with a Shannon-Wiener index (H') of 2.186 (Table 3). The low level of insect diversity is influenced by the number of crop types grown in polyculture farming which only consists of 3 types, namely Maize (*Zea mays*), Asparagus Bean (*Vigna unguiculata* ssp. *sesquipedalis*), and Eggplant (*Solanum melongena*). Several published studies indicate that insect diversity (including species richness and abundance) is strongly influenced by vegetation composition and floral abundance (Yeo et al., 2021; Zurrügg & Frank, 2006). Plant diversity is a good predictor of insect diversity in most habitats (Yeo et al., 2021).

Table 3. Shannon-Wiener diversity index analysis results

No	Species	Ordo	N	pi	ln pi	ABS (pi ln pi)
1	<i>Amata huebneri</i>	Lepidoptera	3	0.081	-2.512	0,204
2	<i>Apis cerana</i>	Hemiptera	3	0.081	-2.512	0,204
3	<i>Bothrogonia addita</i>	Hemiptera	1	0.027	-3.611	0,098
4	<i>Brachyplatys subaeneus</i>	Hemiptera	8	0.216	-1.531	0,331
5	<i>Camponotus japonicus</i>	Hymenoptera	9	0.243	-1.414	0,344
6	<i>Cheilomenes sexmaculata</i>	Coleoptera	4	0.108	-2.225	0,240
7	<i>Cosmolestes picticeps</i>	Hemiptera	1	0.027	-3.611	0,098
8	<i>Euthochtha galeator</i>	Hemiptera	1	0.027	-3.611	0,098
9	<i>Harmonia axyridis</i>	Coleoptera	1	0.027	-3.611	0,098
10	<i>Plantia stali</i>	Hemiptera	2	0.054	-2.918	0,158
11	<i>Sarcophaga carnaria</i>	Diptera	2	0.054	-2.918	0,158
12	<i>Zicrona caerulea</i>	Hemiptera	2	0.054	-2.918	0,158
Total			37	1	-33.391	H' = 2.186

Annotation: ABS = Absolute Value

2. Distribution

All insect species identified in this study were distributed unevenly on each crop type in polyculture farms. The highest number of insect species was found in asparagus bean (*Vigna unguiculata* ssp. *sesquipedalis*) with 7 species followed by maize (*Zea mays*) with 6 species, and eggplant (*Solanum melongena*) with 2 species. Maize and asparagus bean have 3 overlapping species consist of *Bothrogonia addita*, *Cosmolestes picticeps*, and *Apis cerana*. In addition, unique species found maize and asparagus bean were 3 species (e.g., *Sarcophaga carnaria*, *Cheilomenes sexmaculata*, and *Amata huebneri*). and 4 species (e.g., *Brachyplatys subaeneus*, *Harmonia axyridis*, *Zicrona caerulea*, and *Camponotus japonicus*) respectively. Only 2 species were distributed in eggplant, namely *Plantia stali* and *Euthochtha galeator*.

As previously mentioned, the presence of insects is strongly influenced by the composition of the vegetation (Yeo et al., 2021; Zurbrügg & Frank, 2006). In natural habitats with changing host plant availability and quality, herbivorous insects are under selection pressure to find quality hosts (Bruce, 2015). This circumstance is one of the factors in the uneven distribution of insects on each type of plant in polyculture farms.

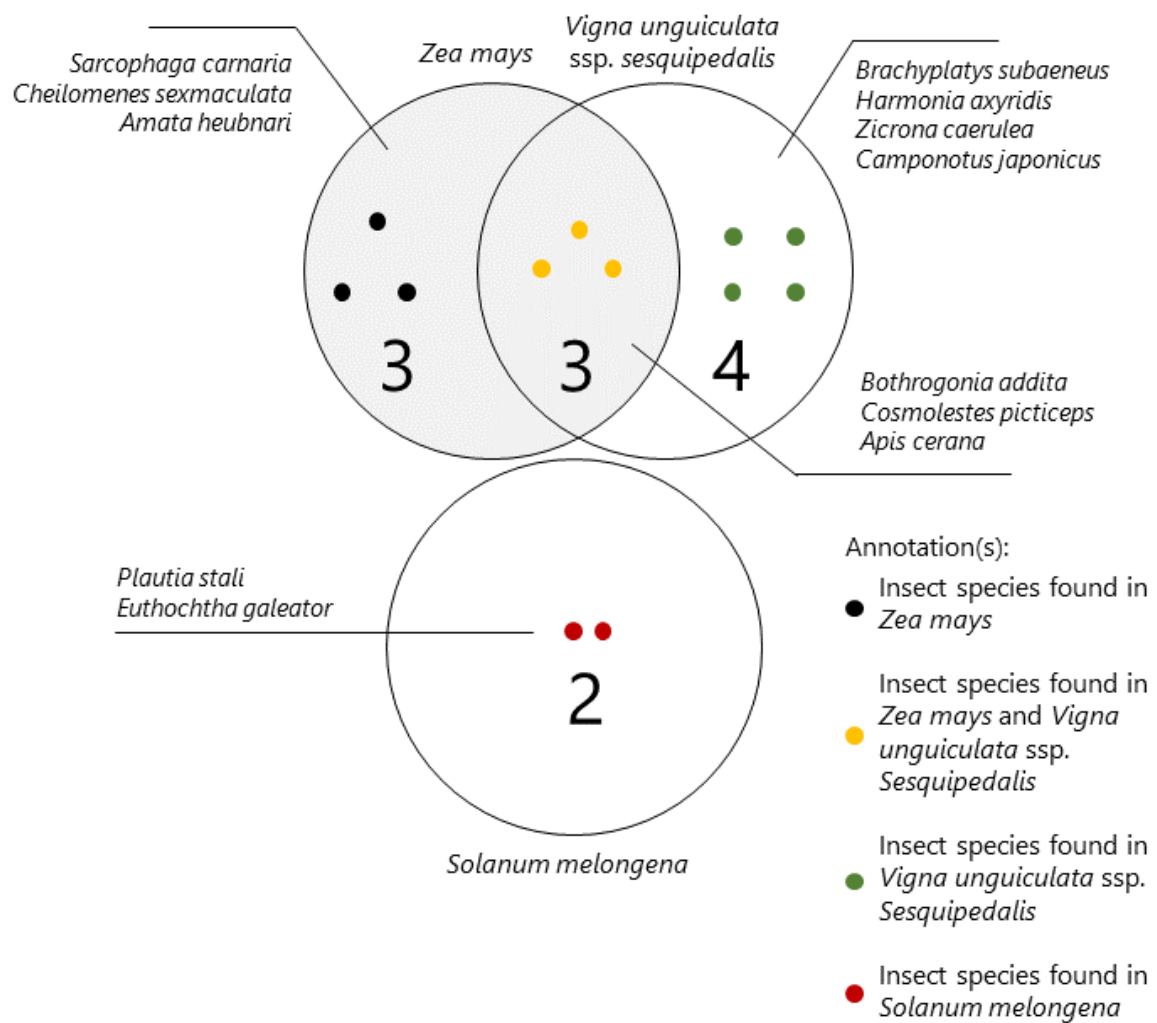


Figure 4. Venn diagram of insect species distribution on each crop type in polyculture farms

3. Insect categories based on their ecological roles

Insect species found in this study were classified into three categories based on their ecological roles. The three categories are pest, predator, and pollinator. About 58.33% of the insects found in this study were insect pests consisting of *Bothrogonia addita*, *Amata heubnari*, *Sarcophaga carnaria*, *Plautia stali*, *Brachyplatys subaeneus*, *Camponotus japonicus*, and *Euthochtha galeator*. Damage to polyculture agricultural crops in this study due to the presence of insect pests was mainly observed in almost all parts of the organs, e.g., leaves, fruits, and flowers. Foliage-eating insects cause severe leaf tearing in maize plants (Figure 5a). In this study, traces of leaf-miner were also observed on Asparagus Bean leaves (Figure 5d). Some types of damage are more important than others depending on the part of the plant damaged and the part harvested (Hill, 2008). Damage to the parts harvested in this study was observed in eggplants damaged by insect pests (Figure 5c).

Insects considered as predators consisted of 4 species (33.33%), e.g., *Cheilomenes sexmaculata*, *Harmonia axyridis*, *Zicrona caerulea*, and *Cosmolestes picticeps*. These predatory insects prey on smaller insects. *C. sexmaculata* and *H. axyridis* are known as natural predators of small

insects from the Aphididae such as *Macrosiphoniella sanborni* and *Myzus persicae* (Endarto & Wuryantini, 2019; Tobing & Nasution, 2007). *Zicrona caerulea* (Blue Shield Bug) is known for its predatory activity on flea beetles of the genus *Altica*. *Z. caerulea* uses cuticular hydrocarbons to identify prey (Xue et al., 2018). *Cosmolestes picticeps* or Yellow Assassin Bug is known as a predatory insect that has an important role in the biological control of herbivorous pests in plantations (Jamian et al., 2017; Nazilah et al., 2020).

Apis cerana (Honey Bee) is the only insect species found in this study that categorized as a pollinator. This bee species is already known as an excellent pollinator for various agricultural crops (Gurmani et al., 2016; Putra et al., 2014; Stanley et al., 2017; Udayani et al., 2020). Honey bees have high pollination efficiency, are generally bred by local bee farmers, and have a wider foraging area making them ideal insect pollinators (Putra et al., 2014).

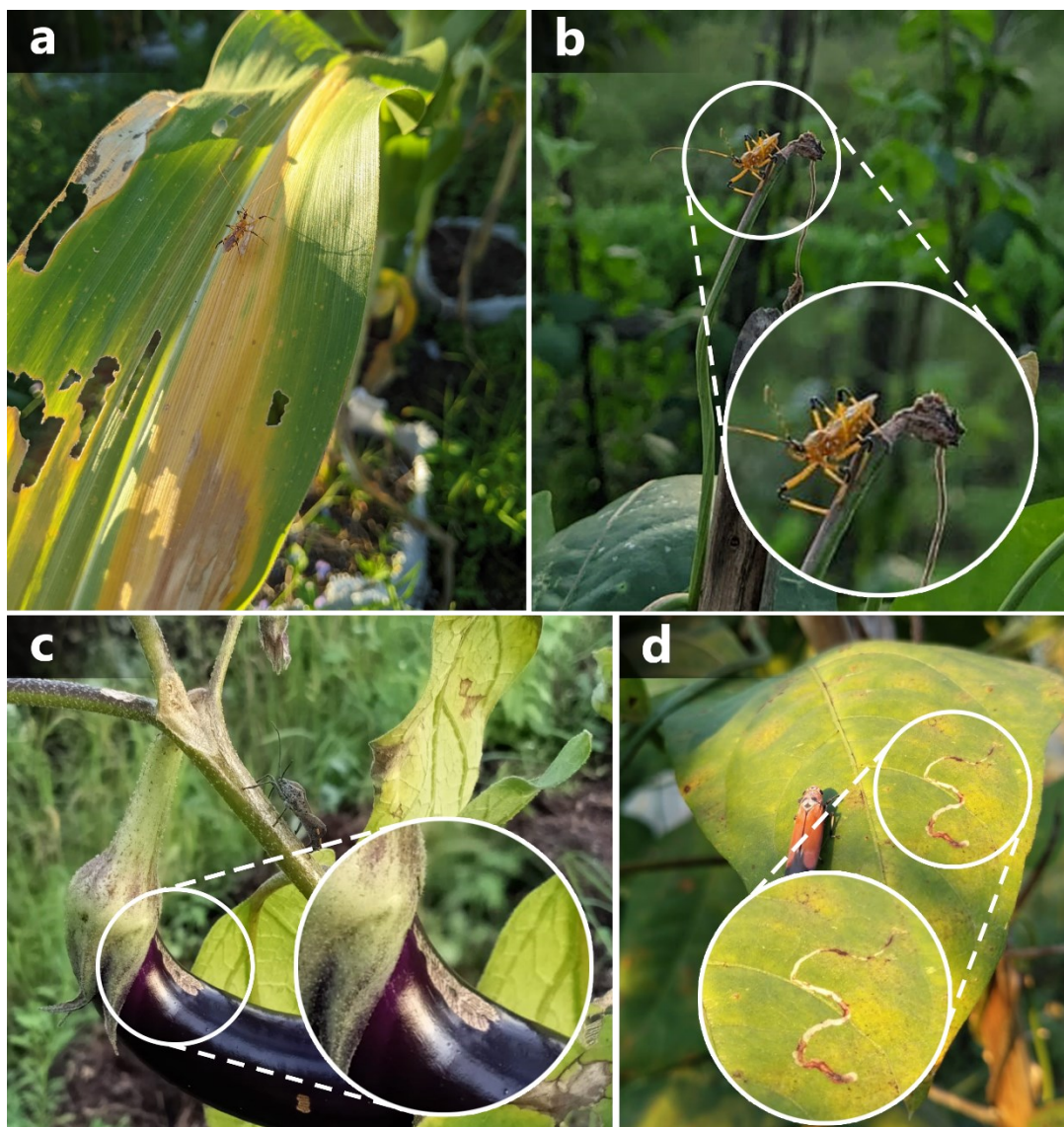


Figure 5. Crop damage by insect pests: (a) Maize (*Zea mays* L.) leaf torn; (b) asparagus bean (*Vigna unguiculata* ssp. *sesquipedalis*) flower damage; (c) Eggplant (*Solanum melongena*) fruit damage; and (d) traces of leaf miner on asparagus bean leaves

CONCLUSION

A total of 12 insect species were identified from polyculture farms belonging to the orders Coleoptera, Diptera, Hemiptera, Lepidoptera, and Hymenoptera. The diversity of insects found in polyculture farming in this study was categorized into low diversity with a Shannon-Wiener index (H') of 2.186. Hemiptera is known to be the most abundant with 7 species identified. Based on the number of individuals, *Comptonotus japonicus* (Formicidae, Hymenoptera) is the most abundant species with 9 individuals. The structure of the insect community based on their ecological role in polyculture farming consisted of 58.33% insect pests, 33.33% predatory insects, and 8.33% pollinating insects.

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