



Urban Jungle



Do you ever dream of escaping the **hubbub of city life** for a quiet weekend in nature? If this is you, you're not alone. The concrete jungle takes its toll on all of us: and it's not just the rat race that's stressful. Though some people prefer to avoid the commotion of city life, others embrace it. The same is true for **wild things**, too.

Urban ecologists concern themselves with understanding nature in cities.

Until now, they've focused on **two big questions**:



Do **fewer species** live in cities compared to natural areas?



Are species that live in cities **different** from their rural counterparts?

The answer to both of these questions, in general, appears to be **yes**. Now how do we put this knowledge to use?



Jenny Ouyang and Davide Dominoni are two urban ecologists who argue that, in order to understand why differences exist, we need to dig into the nitty gritty questions of **how city critters are adapting**. Then, we can **pinpoint what features of cities** drive these changes. In a symposium about adaptation and evolution in cities, Drs. Ouyang and Dominoni **brought together researchers** working on urban questions on a variety of topics, in a variety species. Here's the latest in urban ecology:



life in the city

SPECIES

City communities change. Some species are specialists: they need specific places to live, or things to eat. These species don't do well in cities compared to generalists, who live anywhere and eat anything. Individual species in cities are changing, too. For instance, the black color variant of grey squirrel is strongly associated with cities.

DISEASE

Some bird species have more parasites in cities. Immune function may also be altered. This could affect other species as well: for example, city sparrows are better vectors of West Nile Virus.

Cities are polluted by chemicals, light, and noise, which often contribute to differences between city and rural wildlife. For example, pollinators like butterflies and bees visiting roadside flowers are adapting to higher concentrations of salt and heavy metals.

POLLUTION

Data from birds show that city populations are more stressed than country ones, affecting reproduction, survival, and general health.

STRESS

Cities around the world are creeping and sprawling. By **integrating** these different fields of research, we can piece together the puzzle of how wildlife adapts to urbanization, help **preserve** the nature in our cities, and learn to **share the space** with our wild roommates.

