

ELEGY

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"... a new study says that the vast majority of species on the verge of extinction is in fact humble insects."

—National Geographic News

We're all feeling their absence these days. Who can ignore the silent meadows or the still ponds with no dragonflies left to hover there? Word is, they've still got beetles up north, a few crickets. But moths, from all reports, have gone missing, no longer drawn to flame. And who can remember when they last saw a praying mantis? It's been years. Some say decades. But everyone says summer doesn't sound like summer without cicadas and katydids. Funny, but no one, it seems, can find words for summer nights without fireflies.

Roaches are rampant. But the others? It's all we talk about. The sightings. The rumors. How we miss them. Especially the bees. Their humming, their honey. Nowadays, you'd look in vain for a hive let alone a bee-loud glade. I did see a butterfly the other day, a pale and patchy thing.

It was on the Parkway at a yellow light,
the sun nearly gone, and it just touched down
for a moment on my windshield—
a swallowtail, I think—before it lifted
on wobbly wings and flew away.
Or blew away. I'm not sure which.