

The Buzz About Coffee

The Scoop

Morning coffee is a staple in many households but do you know the impact that your coffee has on the environment? With demands for coffee increasing, coffee plantations have stripped ecosystems of natural plants in order to clear the land for the popular caffeine bean. Historically, the modernization of coffee growing methods, from small farms grown amongst the natural plant life to immense plantations baking in the sun, came from a desire to eliminate natural diseases in the coffee plants and maximize production.



However, deforestation in areas where coffee is a staple crop, particularly in Latin and South America, has resulted in smaller patches of plant life to support the vast plant and animal life native to these regions. For this reason some coffee growers have returned back to the historic methods of growing coffee.



Shade-grown coffee grows in the natural canopy of plants and can flourish right alongside the native plants and animals. These patches of natural forest provide incredible habitat for biodiversity. The benefits of these more natural plantations include decreased soil loss, natural removal of carbon from the environment by the flora, and easier pollination. In particular, shade-grown coffee has been shown to increase bird abundance and diversity who are otherwise threatened by loss of suitable habitats.

How You Can Help:

Support shade-grown coffee plantations by looking for shade-grown coffee at your local stores. The Smithsonian Migratory Bird Center even created a Bird Friendly Coffee seal for coffee growers that adhere to the most bird friendly practices!



Sources:

Jha, Shalene, et al. "Shade Coffee: Update on a Disappearing Refuge for Biodiversity." *BioScience*, vol. 64, no. 5, 2014, pp. 416–428., doi:10.1093/biosci/biu038.

"The Ecological Benefits of Shade-Grown Coffee The Case for Going Bird Friendly®." *Smithsonian's National Zoo*,
nationalzoo.si.edu/scbi/migratorybirds/coffee/bird_friendly/ecological-benefits-of-shade-grown-coffee.cfm.