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NATIONAL INSTITUTE of ENTOMOLOGY NEWS



The National
Institute of
Entomology

The official newsletter of the National Institute of Entomology

Volume 2: Issue 1

January 2026

FROM THE CHAIRMAN



Welcome everyone to the first issue of N.I.O.E NEWS for 2026.

After the 2025 National Insect Expo and the holiday period, we are all nicely refreshed and excited for what 2026 will bring to all our students and readers.

Although we missed mentioning it in the November Issue, we were happy to promote the 2025 ABC Australian Insect of the Year Award on our websites Home page.

This is an important program that highlights insects and their importance to the general public and the ABC deserves our and indeed everyone's support.

In other important news for the first half of 2026, the National television program **ABC—GARDENING AUSTRALIA** will televise the 2025 National Insect Expo episode that was

filmed on site at the expo on Saturday the 4th of October.

The film crew arrived on site at 7:00 am and finished filming well after 3:00 pm after having interviewed many of our exhibitors as well as yours truly. Cant wait to see the end result and I will publish the screening date and times once I hear from them.

We have started a new segment in N.I.O.E NEWS highlighting our Expo Exhibitors, their backgrounds and history as well as the person driving their enterprise. I'm sure you will find some of their stories fascinating.

The first exhibitor to be highlighted in this new segment is Billy Tamayo from Ants Squared.

National Junior Bug Club for 2026 will be commencing on March 3rd after school resumes on February 10th.

This is to allow students one week to settle into the new school year.

Thanks everyone.

Dr Bert Candusio



Costa Georgiadis and Millie Ross
from Gardening Australia

STOP THE PRESSES!

In a new development, the Shire of Mitchell has entered into negotiations with the Institute regarding the possibility of utilizing the vacant Kilmore Town Hall...Yes folks, you read that right.

This immaculate building of nearly 300 square meters would be absolutely perfect for all the Institutes requirements from collections storage, research library, laboratories and permanent science and training classrooms.

There is also ample room for Administration and Imaging equipment.

We will keep you posted as to how this exciting opportunity develops.



Hanging Rock Field Station Application

The institute has put in an application to the Macedon Ranges Shire Council for the use of the former Hanging Rock Tennis Club building.

The building is currently empty and has been for some time. It is also starting to show some slight deterioration on the verandah decking due to weathering.

The institute has proposed that the building be used as the National Institute of Entomology Field and Research Station.

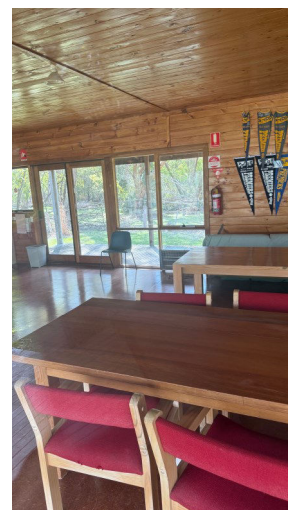
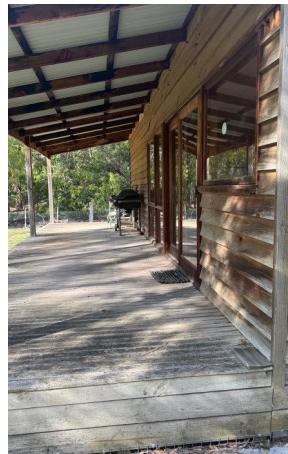
The proposed use will allow the Institute to begin formal training of Field Entomologists,

Outdoor Courses, Educational Programs, Environmental Studies as well as many other practical programs.

tical programs.

Dr Bert Candusio stated that the establishment of the National Institute of Entomology Research Field Station would be of important value scientifically for future insect population studies at the Hanging Rock Reserve and that insect and related invertebrate survey monitoring will be used to assess the environmental stability of the site.

It is also envisioned that programs involving members of the general public will also be conducted at the Research Station during the year.



The abandoned Hanging Rock Tennis Club Building as a potential Research/ Training Station for the Institute.

N.I.O.E NEWS now 10 Pages

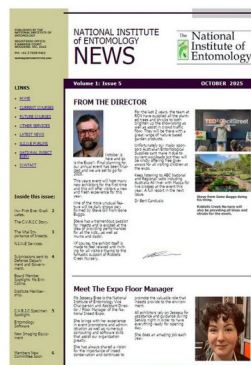
The National Institute of Entomology NEWS has expanded to a 10 page publication so that more articles can be added to each issue.

As we get busier and busier here at the centre, there are lots of new news articles coming in every day.

Also, there is a great number of new discoveries in the field of Entomology that we love sharing with all our readers each month.

There are also some new sections we would like to add in 2026 and this 10 page format will help in allowing room for the new segments.

We hope you enjoy what the NEWS is doing and feel free to drop in any suggestions that you would like added. Email: admin@entoinsitute.org



National Institute of Entomology NEWS now moves onto a new 10 Page format.

Australian Entomological Supplies is a family-owned business that has been supplying entomologists, educators and enthusiasts alike with quality scientific equipment, supplies and books since 1962.

We proudly manufacture some of the finest entomological equipment available worldwide, right here in Australia.

We are situated in the Northern Rivers of New South Wales, from where we supply products throughout Australia and the rest of the world.

If you have an entomological equipment need, we can most certainly meet it!

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SINCE 1962

New Service - Specimen Repair / Restoration

From time to time, insect specimens may be damaged because of their frail nature.

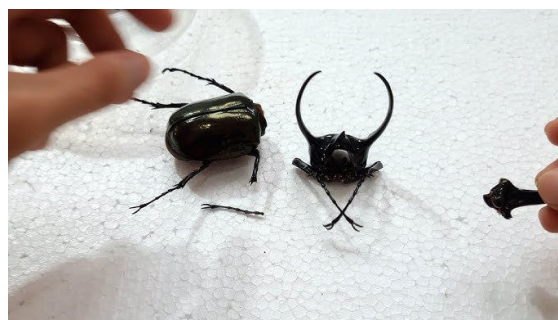
A knock or bump is often all it needs to cause limb damage and detachment.

When a valuable or rare item is damaged, a skilled entomological technician can repair and restore the specimen to its former condition.

If you have a specimen

or specimens requiring attention or repair, let us do what we do best and help bring your entomological specimens back to their former selves.

After a short consultation, specimen/s can be sent to us for repair then promptly returned.



A new and important service of specimen repair is now available through the Institute.

New Courses — Insect Morphology Module 1

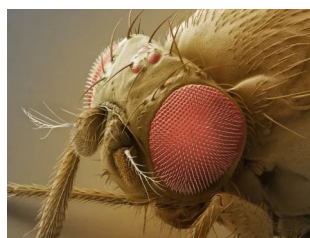
This 2 week course will introduce the student to the external morphology of the insect in general and will look at the variability, adaptability and functions of each feature.

The head and Thorax (Week 1), and Abdomen (Week 2) will be examined and discussed in detail.

This the first course of its kind offered to entomology students in Australia and provides a good foundation in understanding insect

external structure and function.

NOTE: Students wishing to undertake this Module will need to have completed the Introduction to Entomology Course NIOE -101C.



INSECT MORPHOLOGY AND STRUCTURE (Cert) Module 1 - Early 2026. Course Duration: 2 Weeks

Insect Morphology Module 2

Module 2 of this 2 week course delves into more detail of the Morphology of the Insect and introduces the student to the various Taxonomic Terms used in species identifications.

The external morphology will be covered to a greater extent compared to Module 1 and will look at the variability, adaptability and functions of each insect feature.

The head (Week 1), Thorax and Abdomen (Week 2) will be examined and discussed in detail.

PLEASE NOTE: Students wishing to undertake this Module will need to have completed the following Courses and Modules: Introduction to Entomology Course NIOE -101C. Insect Morphology and Structure Module 1 NIOE -06C



INSECT MORPHOLOGY AND STRUCTURE (Cert) Module 2 - Early 2026. Course Duration: 2 Weeks

Entomology News

Bee swarming on the rise in South Australia, but varroa mite predicted to impact 95pc of feral hives.

Reports of bee swarms in South Australia's South East have increased significantly after a "hectic" spring, but the ongoing threat of varroa mite to feral bee populations has potential to near-eradicate swarms in coming years.

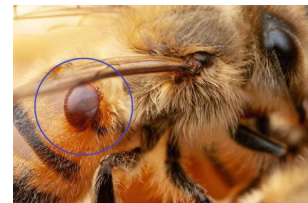
Pest controller and apiarist

Sam Shaw said demand for swarmed bee removals has increased about tenfold from two or three calls per month a few years ago to 20 or 24 per month this year. "So far it's been pretty hectic," he said.

"We've had a good spring so far. I know [the swarming season] came a bit later last year. "It just completely depends on the weather as well and it depends on how much room the queen has

in a hive." Although swarms more often form due to favorable conditions for bees, Professor Mikheyev said bees would also abandon a hive if it were diseased. In areas infected by varroa mite, this could lead to an increase in swarming behavior.

"If a colony is very heavily infested, they will sometimes fly off," Professor Mikheyev said.



Rare Ball-Nosed Plant hopper Rediscovered by Entomologists in Iowa

A 12-year effort by a pair of entomologists in Iowa solves some mysteries about an elusive plant hopper species, *Fitchiella robertsonii*, including key host plants and environments. The 219 specimens they caught in Iowa prairies are 90 percent of *F. robertsonii* ever collected by scientists, marking a huge leap forward for prospective conservation of the species. Iowa State scientists initiated the research after another first, the accidental catch in 2008 of what turned out to be a single member of the species, never found before in Iowa. Co-author and entomologist M.J. Hatfield was collecting bees and wasps on a

hill in Allamakee County at the northeastern tip of Iowa when a minuscule insect, unfamiliar to her, turned up in her pan trap, a yellow container filled with antifreeze killing agent. She recognized it as unusual, and indeed it was—and not just for Iowa. Historically, the ball-nosed plant hopper had been recorded from only a few observations in 16 states and Ontario, Canada. There is no guarantee it still exists in most of them, and in some states it is considered either rare or endangered. The 219 specimens caught during the newly reported research represent "90 percent of the world's collection," says lead author Mar-

lin Rice, Ph.D., retired entomologist and affiliate professor in the Department of Plant Pathology, Entomology, and Microbiology at Iowa State University.



Institute Membership

Becoming a Member of the National Institute of Entomology offers several benefits such as:

1: Discounts to Members wishing to undertake our Courses and Training Programs.

2: Access to our facilities if you are wishing to work on your own Research or Study Project.

3: Members are offered the opportunity to serve on a variety of Organizing Committees and Sub Committees.

4: As a Member of the National Institute of Entomology, you receive our Monthly Newsletter

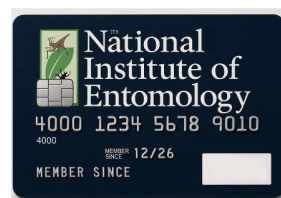
keeping you updated on Institute News.

5: You are granted access to the Institutes extensive Forums covering Taxonomy/News/Job Vacancies and Volunteer Opportunities.

6: Discounted tickets to the annual National Insect Expo.

To become a Member of the National Institute of Entomology, please visit our

[Membership Page](#) for further details and Membership Options.



C.V.R.I.C Specimen Spotlight

C.V.R.I.C Specimen:000124

Camponotus ephippium is a species of carpenter ant (genus *Camponotus*) found in Australia. It has two subspecies, *C. ephippium ephippium* and *C. ephippium narses*.

Camponotus ephippium, commonly known as the saddleback carpenter ant, is a striking species found across Australia, particularly in South Australia.

This species, named for its unique coloration and robust build, is known for its resilience and adaptability in both its natural habitat and in captive care.

With two subspecies, *C. ephippium ephippium* and *C. ephippium narses*, this ant represents the diversity and beauty of the Cam-

ponotus genus.

Camponotus ephippium workers are approximately 6 mm in length, displaying a striking combination of black and ferruginous red.

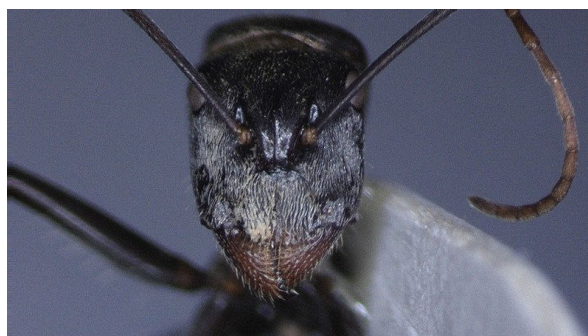
The red coloration extends across the pro- and mesothorax, while the abdomen is adorned with pale yellow silky hairs.

This unique coloration not only gives them their common name but also allows them to blend seamlessly into their natural surroundings.



Camponotus ephippium:

One of the more unusual species of the Genus *Camponotus*. Collected in 1991 during a survey of the Red Hill Mining Site, HEATHCOTE.VIC.



Volunteer of the Month

Mr. Nigel Aish has been involved with the Institute for several years and plays an important role as a valuable supporting team member during the annual National Insect Expo.

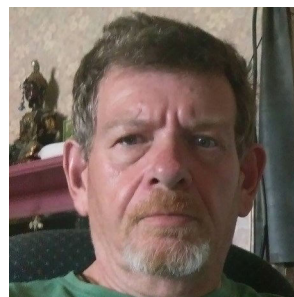
Nigel provides ground support for Door Entries and Admissions Management, Ground Floor support and site logistics.

Nigel also has many years experience in Accounting and Book Keeping and as a result, often provides financial Data Entry services for the Institute Accounting records.

He is also responsible for the very important task of Exhibitor Name Card preparation and allocations...no mean feat!

Nigel travels every year from Adelaide, South Australia to Woodends Buffalo Stadium in order to help support the event for the 3 days every October.

His assistance and support is greatly appreciated.



'Mr. Nigel Aish travels from South Australia to Woodends Buffalo Sports Stadium to assist with the National Insect Expo every year. His help and support is greatly appreciated by all.'

From the Forum

Western Australian researchers Mark Wong and Jane McRae have recently described a diminutive new species of unearthly looking ant in the journal *Zoo Keys*, naming it after the infamous Harry Potter villain Lord Voldemort.

The new, ghostly looking species, *Leptanilla voldemort*, is a rare find in Australia, with only one other *Leptanilla* species, *L. swani*, known in Australia.

This new subterranean ant species was found only after researchers collected specimens from a 25 metre deep hole in the Pilbara region of

Western Australia. The authors note that, much like its namesake, *L. voldemort* is slender, pale, has sharp fangs and thrives in darkness. *Leptanilla voldemort* is not only notable for its unusual appearance, but also its significance to our understanding of ant evolution. A [recent paper](#) published in the journal *Nature* has resolved *Leptanilla* as a group of ants that are sister to all other ant species globally.

While the Pilbara is an economically valuable region, discoveries like these remind us that there are also incredibly valuable, globally important discoveries to be made in remote



Dr Russell G Wilkinson Collection

Dr Russell George Wilkinson (1/2/1939-2/7/2019) grew up in Perth, WA.

His undergraduate degree was in the Zoology Dept at the University of Western Australia, majoring in Entomology.

This was when the bulk of his collection was made. It is possible that some of the specimens he collected at this time, particularly in the area of Perry's Lakes, are now extinct since this area has long since become a housing estate.

His Professor advised him to get into 'this new molecular biology' and he won a scholarship to get his PhD from London University at the Lister

Institute.

(These days the once famous Lister Institute is a private hospital specializing in IVF and cosmetic surgery.) He followed this with Post-Doc work at Johns Hopkins in the US.

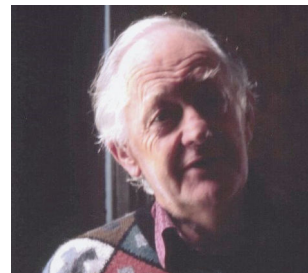
He was offered a lecturer position in the Dept of Microbiology at the University of Melbourne and that is where he remained until his retirement as senior lecturer.

He specialized in anaerobic bacteriology. Although his career took him away from entomology, it remained a life-long interest.

On a work trip to PNG in 1982 he bought some specimens to

add to his collection, it being illegal to collect them himself.

In retirement, his interest came to the fore. He ran a silkworm project which he took to local primary schools, having mastered the art of spinning the silk off the cocoon without harming the chrysalis.



Cont..

Thus the whole life cycle could be observed with the population controlled by the number of eggs one kept.

After making the 'tree change' to Hepburn Shire and becoming a Foundation Member of the U3A and joining a local garden club, he gave talks on insects and helped educate both adults and children on differences between types of insects, which insects were beneficial in the garden, which to be wary of etc.

He was something of a local expert and people would leave

insects in jars in his letterbox for his opinion on whether they were 'good' or 'bad' on the particular plant on which they were found (or does this 'bite' and is it poisonous?).

His expertise stretched to the arachnids and he was the 'go-to' man to rescue people at all hours from the mythical 'tarantula the size of a dinner plate' found in their home.

This was despite his explaining that Australia lacks tarantulas and Huntsmen are indeed useful....

Dr Wilkinson's collection now resides with the National Institute of Entomology thanks to the generous donation by his wife Peppa.



A portion of the Wilkinson Collection goes on display every year at the National Insect Expo.

Dr Bert Candusio with a part of the Russell George Wilkinson Collection

National Junior Entomology Club Ready for 2026

The National Junior Entomology (Bug Club) is gearing up for 2026 and promises another year of full on insect studies over the internet for Australian students from all states.

Ms Amber Glyn Jones said that following on from last years program, students will be moving onto more complex studies such as Taxonomy and Insect Ecology.

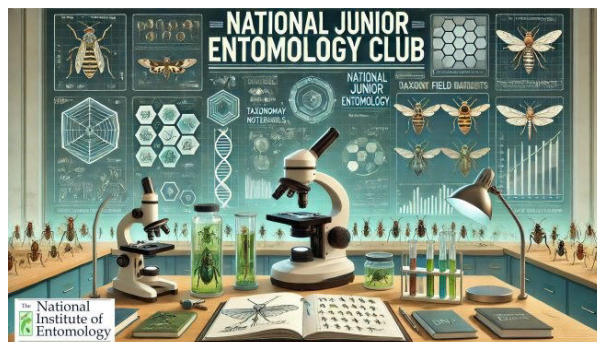
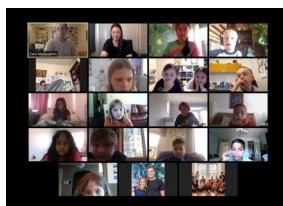
Students work each year towards their Club Grades and add each assignment to their students yearly workbook.

As a result of last years National Insect Expo exhibit that Bug

Club Students put on, many new students have become members for the 2026 year.

New students may enroll here:

[National Insect Bug Club](#)



From the Forum: 79% of Fijian Insect Species in Decline

Insect populations have declined worldwide, but the extent and drivers of these declines are debated.

Most studies rely on field surveys performed in the past century, leaving gaps in our understanding of longer-term trends. Using a "community genomics" approach, we estimated community assembly over millions of years and more recent demographic trends of ant species in the Fijian archipelago.

We found that 79% of endemic species are in decline, starting after the arrival of humans approximately 3000 years ago and accelerating in the past 300 years, whereas recent arrivals are expanding.

The primary correlate of population decline among endemic species was found to be sensitivity to habitat

disturbance. This study demonstrates the value of contemporary collections for estimating long-term community trends and highlights the vulnerability of endemic island species to anthropogenic change.'

'Recent advances in genomic techniques offer a deeper time window into historical population and community trends (23). These developments can provide insights into insects' demographic responses to historical human activities and other phenomena without collections or observations that span the time frame of interest.'

'Here, we used the ant community of the Fijian archipelago as a model system with which to evaluate long-term population and community trends and their biogeographic, ecological, and historical context. To do this, we used a community genomics approach (i.e., inferring patterns and processes using genomic data across a community of species) applied to contemporary collections.'

'Moreover, the consequences of human impacts on islands often unfold rapidly and have caused many documented extinctions during settlement history (35). Therefore, island systems provide a good model for evaluating long-term trends and the impacts of human activities to shed light on present-day insect declines.'



Species in decline all across Fiji.

Cont..

'We sequenced 4132 specimens from 144 ant species and 40 genera.'

'Our phylogenomic analysis revealed that the Fijian ant community was assembled through at least 65 colonization events. First, 26 lineages colonized Fiji naturally and led to the evolution of 88 endemic species. The high level of endemism was the result of colonizations that occurred millions of years ago followed by both in situ radiation (cladogenesis) and divergence from mainland, a further 23 colonizations occurred by widespread species native to the Pacific region. This group is likely a mixture of species that colonized Fiji naturally and others that were brought more recently by human movements within the region. Finally, at least 16 non-native species were brought

by humans from outside of the Pacific region (Fig. 1A and figs. S1 and S2) after Fiji was connected to global commerce networks.'

'To examine the population trends of these species, we used demographic modeling (44) to characterize changes in effective population size (N_e) for each of the 240 geographic ant populations belonging to 72 species. We found that 79% of endemic species are in decline.'

'In contrast, we detected substantial population expansions in both widespread Pacific species and non-native species that occurred rapidly over the past four centuries, with no declines detected in these groups.'

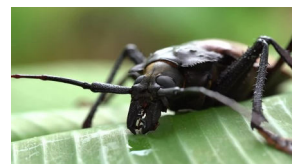
'We also found that the reductions in endemic species begin after the

arrival of humans ~3000 years ago in Fiji and continued until the present, with most declines concentrated in the previous few hundred years.'

'Overall, endemic species are mostly limited to higher elevation, where more intact habitats are still found.'

'Population trends are strongly correlated with habitat disturbance, because species found in more disturbed lowland habitats typically show population expansion, whereas those now found in more intact upland habitats are declining.'

'Our results suggest that most endemic ant species of the Fijian archipelago have declined since the arrival of humans, whereas species that are tolerant of or adapted to human-dominant habitats, including



Cont...

'Population trends are strongly correlated with habitat disturbance, because species found in more disturbed lowland habitats typically show population expansion, whereas those now found in more intact upland habitats are declining.'

'Our results suggest that most endemic ant species of the Fijian archipelago have declined since the arrival of humans, whereas species that are tolerant of or adapted to human-dominant habitats, including all widely distributed and alien species, are expanding.'



A Lost World Discovered

Dr Jess Marsh had spent 45 minutes crawling and twisting through the claustrophobic limestone tunnels of the Nullarbor Plain when she first saw it.

Perched on the wall of a cave chamber was the almost perfect mummified remains of small, reddish wasp about 2 centimeters long wasp with translucent wings.

Its stand-out feature? It had no eyes.

"This wasp is the only wasp in the world that is known to have adapted like that to a cave life," said Dr Marsh, an entomologist and arachnologist — an insect and spider expert — at the University of Adelaide.

"The first specimen was actually climbing up the wall of the cave ... like they'd been freeze-dried."

The preserved insect, yet to be taxonomically described, was one of the

crowning discoveries from a research expedition in April with cavers from the Australian Speleological Federation (ASF).

Eleven caves on the Western Australia side of the 200,000 square kilometer Nullarbor region were examined in a biological survey, funded by the Australian Research Council and the Hermon Slade



Cont..

Foundation.

The caves were selected based on previous sightings of underground critters by cave-exploring citizen scientists.

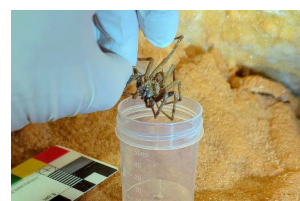
ASF president Andrew Stempel said the trip, which found specimens at five of the sites, had been an "incredible" collaboration connecting caver knowledge with expert scientists.

"It took many years and many cavers and a lot of hard yards," he said.

The wasp was found in a cave that contains passages that run for about 10 kilometers, which had previously been mapped out by scientists.

It wasn't the only remains the researchers found either.

The cave was full of thousands of mummified bodies of spiders, cockroaches, centipedes and other insects, preserved thanks to the salty cave conditions.



Cont...

Dr Marsh said when she first locked eyes on the site she was captured by its otherworldly beauty.

"It's not like anything I've ever seen before," she said. "[It had] the most amazing cave decorations I've ever seen, so stalactites, stalagmites and huge long salt straws [thin pillars of salt that sway in the cave breeze]. No living critters remain because of some sort of invertebrate world-ending cataclysm that occurred an unknown number

of years ago. What excited Dr Marsh was the potential relationship between the blind arachnids and the wasp, which she thought was from the spider-hunting family called Pom-pilidae.

"It's a really interesting story if they've both evolved to a cave-adapted lifestyle where they've lost their eyes independently but are linked through parasitism," she said.

Matt Shaw, a collection manager at the Australian Museum and not part of the recent expedition, said finding a wasp and spiders with regressed features was fantastic for science.



Top to Bottom:

- 1: Newly discovered eyeless wasp.
- 2: Dr Jess Marsh collecting samples.
- 3: Preserved in the salty Nullarbor cave.
- 4: Hundreds of preserved invertebrates were found.
- 5: Dead Troglodiplura spider specimen.
- 6: Blind cave spider Tartarus species.

An Expo Exhibitor Story - Ants Squared

Billy Tamayo hails from Sydney N.S.W and travels down to the National Insect Expo each year along with an amazing assortment of ant keeping items and materials representing his Ants Squared business.

Billy Writes: My son's obsession with ants changed my life. Like all obsessions, it began with a YouTube video. He begged me for a queen ant. Sure, I have a biology degree but ants were not in my field. So we sat down and watched a few ant videos together. It wasn't long before, yes, we bought our first ant queen and her nest; and watching them in their little nests reinforced my curiosity - hunting, foraging and scurrying around living their simple lives. My kid soon

lost interest - but not me. I started collecting my own queen ants as I walked around the neighborhood and began to design and build my own nests. That led me to other ant hobbyist and soon I was talking and exchanging information on the various ant species in my area, around NSW and other parts of Australia.

In the last couple of years, I've started to lead ant focused bushwalks with the local community. I've also started to give talks about ants and the environment with the local councils and libraries, as well as helping teachers introduce ant colonies into their classrooms.

Now I've started a website

providing queen ants and ant products called antsquared.com.

We not only supply locally made and imported ant nests and accessories but we also provide information to new and experienced ant keepers about different ant species in NSW and Australia.



Billy Tamayo conducting one of his outdoor ant education sessions.

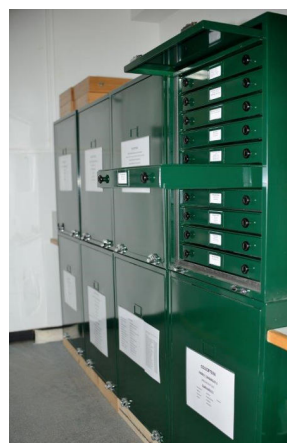
Institute Expands Collections Storage

The National Institute of Entomology has expanded its collections storage capacity with the addition of 2 CSIRO designed 10 drawer entomological cabinets and base stand.

This new equipment will add another 20 drawers to its storage capabilities that will bring the overall number of drawers to 70. It is estimated that another 10 of these cabinets will be needed in order to properly house all pinned specimens within the C.V.R.I.C Collec-

tions as well as other donated insect collection material.

This purchase has been made possible with funds from the 2025 National Insect Expo and Dr Bert Candusio, Chair of the National Institute of Entomology, hopes to be able to add 2 more every year.



Australian Entomological Supplies is the primary source in Australia for these units

Institute Pioneers

Ms Zoe Thompson

Ms Zoe Thompson volunteered for the Insectarium of Victoria for several years during the late 1990's when the facility was still operating from the Woodend location (now Coles).

Zoe played an important role in maintaining many of the live insect displays that were kept at the center as well as attending to public visitors during their visits.

She was also fundamental in supporting the then curator, Dr Bert Candusio during school

excursions with student groups often numbering as high as 300 children at a time!!

Because of the support of people like Zoe, the former Insectarium of Victoria was able to grow into the important Institution it is today.

Zoe...many thanks for your help in getting there.



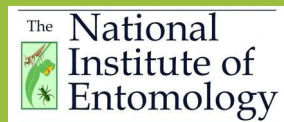
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NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF ENTOMOLOGY — CONSERVATION.RESEARCH.TRAINING.

Members Committee Opportunity

The National Institute of Entomology will shortly be calling for interested members to serve on the Institutes Funding and Grants Committee and the National Insect Expo Committee.

The role of these Committees will be to apply for grants and funding in order to assist the Institute towards equipment acquisitions, purchase of entomological storage cabinets and other equipment or institute training and courses programs and Insect Expo Planning.

Keep watching this section for further announcements and when to apply.

The Institute is supported by the kind generosity of members of the public by way of Tax Deductable donations to the Institute. Such donations may be in the form of unwanted Scientific Equipment (microscopes, laboratory supplies etc), Entomological Reference Books, Audio Visual Equipment, Entomological Insect Collections or Monetary Donations.



These generous contributions assist the Institute in supporting our students and members of the public that are undergoing entomological studies and programs as well as supporting the Institutes ongoing research work. If you are wanting to make a valued Donation towards our work, here is the link: [Donations](#)

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Courses and Programs are offered throughout the year and include Certificate Courses in General Entomology, Applied Entomology, Insect Classification, Identification Courses, Entomological Collecting Techniques and much more.

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