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ENTOMOLOGY

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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 2

February 2026

FROM THE CHAIRMAN



I am also thrilled to announce that the 2026 ABC NATIONAL RADIO Australian Insect of the Year Awards will be officially opened at our National Insect Expo on Saturday October 3rd.

Keep an eye out on our website for further news and developments regarding this exciting event!.

In news just in, the ABC 2026 National Insect of the Year Award opening will be announced at the 2026 national Insect Expo in October!

See you all in March.

Dr Bert Candusio

ITS OFFICIAL: The ABC Australian Insect of the Year was announced on November 8th last year and the winner is...

The Graphic Flutterer Dragonfly *Rhyothemis graphiptera*

This was a great initiative by Gavan McGrath of ABC Radio in that it helps increase the public awareness of insects and their vital conservational importance.

This is something I have been working towards for close to 40 years and any opportunity that presents itself that tries to do the same, I and the National Institute of Entomology will support it.



We should also be hearing soon about the Gardening Australia episode that was filmed during last years expo and the date it will go to air nationally. Ill announce the date as soon as we hear.

Institute on ABC Breakfast Radio

ABC: After a long history of insect collecting around Central Victoria, the collection of the former Insectarium of Victoria was destroyed by its current owners.

Recently, the collection held by La Trobe University was also in danger of being lost.

Dr Bert Candusio has helped save the important collection, and set up the National Institute of Entomology in order to help preserve this valuable resource.

He spoke with Sian Gard about what the collection reveals about our native insects and what research is being done into the evolution of our tiny critters.

Click the ABC Logo to listen.



A Living Jewel Discovered

In the lush gardens and forests of Asia, among the petals of orchids and marigolds, hides a creature so stunning it seems crafted by an artist — the Jeweled Flower Mantis (*Creobroter gemmatus*), also known as the Indian Flower Mantis (*Creobroter pictipennis*).

Belonging to the genus *Creobroter* — from the Greek for “flesh-eater” — these insects are both delicate and deadly. Adults typically measure just 3–5 cm in length, with females larger and stockier than males. They are ambush predators, relying on camouflage rather than speed. When perched on blossoms, their vibrant colors help them disappear in plain sight, luring unsuspecting prey such as flies, bees, and moths

close enough to strike.

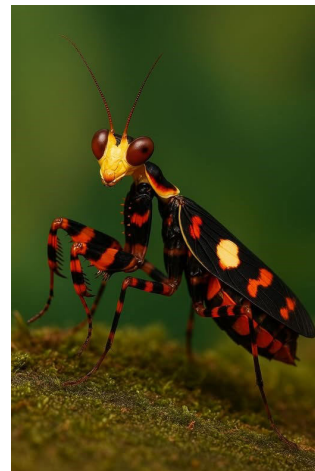
A Jeweled Flower Mantis is a master of stillness. For hours, it can remain motionless, swaying gently like a petal in the breeze. But when the moment comes, it strikes with lightning precision, using raptorial forelegs lined with sharp spines to snatch and immobilize prey.

Within seconds, what appeared to be a harmless ornament of the flower reveals itself as a predator of rare elegance.

They also possess remarkable defensive displays — when threatened, they spread their wings to reveal vivid eyespots and contrasting colors, startling would-be predators into hesitation.

In flight, they resemble drifting petals, turning survival into an art form.

Small, silent, and perfectly disguised, this living gem waits among the blooms — proof that the wildest artistry is found not in galleries, but in the undergrowth.



Indian Flower Mantis (*Creobroter pictipennis*).

Life Patron - Mr Derek Conn

We are pleased to announce that Mr Derek Conn is now a recipient of the **National Institute of Entomology Life Patron Award** for 28 years of technical support and internet hosting on behalf of the N.I.O.E.

Rick has been with us since the early days of the Insectarium of Victoria back in 1992 right up to the relocation to Woodend and finally, supporting the National Institute of Entomology after the 2022 acquisition of the Central Victorian Regional Insect Collection from La Trobe University.

Rick provided support for all our email accounts, websites as well as being our Hosting Provider for close to 30 years, all without charge because he was a great supporter

of the Insectarium, the Institute and our Educational Programs.

Both Derek and his wife Catriona are keen conservationists and understand the vital role that insects and related invertebrates play in any ecosystem.

We wish Rick and Catriona all the very best in their retirement and trip around Australia.



Mr Derek Conn
Awarded the Life Patron award for close to 30 years of support for the National Institute of Entomology.

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.

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The Search For An Institute Home - Part 1

WOODEND HEALTH BUILDING

This is a fairly lengthy article regarding what the Institute has gone through and every possibility we have followed in order to have a permanent home for our activities, students and collections.

This all began not long after the Central Victorian Regional Insect Collections were re-located to Woodend from La Trobe University in Bendigo in 2022

We first approached the Macedon Ranges Shire regarding the mostly empty Community Health Centre in Woodend. This building was vacated after Sunbury Community Health moved back to Sunbury.

Our first feedback was positive. Yes, put in a submission, get incorporated as a Not For Profit and if Council doesn't require the site, put in an Expression of Interest and you may be successful we were told.

12 months later we were told that the report regarding the site was going to Council. Two months later...Zilch.

You cant have it was the response.! Apparently, a Victorian State Government Department (we cant find out which one) had overridden the council and took the site over. Not even councillors were informed and their enquiries fell on deaf ears.

The building remains empty.

Our first dead end.

Councillors have been kept in the dark regarding the use of the Woodend Community Health Building. Asking questions got the following response from council officers..."Don't ask questions!!".



Cont...

WOODEND TOURIST INFORMATION CENTRE

The next path we took was the Woodend Community Hub Project.

This multi million dollar development would see the existing Woodend Library demolished and replaced with a state of the art community multi purpose centre.

Because of the relocation of the TIC staff to this new facility, we have been

ready for the very long term wait in order to potentially occupy the TIC Building.

The problem here is that the project will not commence in the foreseeable future due to lack of final funding.

We may be waiting for years until this would become something viable for the Institute..

This remains a stand-by option at this stage and both Local and Federal Ministers weren't of any help whatsoever. ...another setback.

Although this was a great opportunity for the Institute, the long wait did not really suit us. We needed a home as soon as possible.



Cont...

WOODEND MASONIC HALL DRAMA.

This is one episode that really hit us hard. After being abandoned for over 5 years, the Woodend Masonic Hall in Forrest Street was approached by the Institute.

Negotiations were commenced in order to get a long term lease agreement and as part of these negotiations, we offered to fully

restore and repair the building and re landscape the site. All seemed to be going well with negotiations taking 6 lease drafts with the final 7th draft being accepted by both parties.

This took nearly 7 months.

The Masons Properties Committee was in the negotiation loop right from the start.. However, as soon as the agreed lease went to the committee for final approval,

they decided to sell the site under our noses and grab the cash instead. The unused 1935 community built Masons Hall was sold for over \$900,000. No wonder the Masons are a dying institution!...move on.

The Masons in their wisdom decided to capitalize the building for cash instead of supporting a valuable community institution.

Perhaps this explains their dwindling membership numbers.



The Search For An Institute Home...cont

MACEDON EMERGENCY TRAINING FACILITY

This one was a classic. Once the Masonic Hall option fell through, the search for a home lead us to the Emergency Training Facility on Mount Macedon. An impressive site with multiple conferencing and training rooms as well as accommodation for 100 students.

After an initial few phone calls, the feedback we received was that Not For

Profit groups such as ours could easily be catered for and based on this feedback, an inspection was arranged several weeks later.

Then the proverbial hit the fan.

After getting the impression that a peppercorn NFP lease was possible, we received notification that our application could proceed get this... for \$155,000 per annum plus overheads.

In other words, the so called Not For Profit line that was fed to our Institute was

always a money making exercise for a Government owned and run facility looking to claw back tax payer funded expenditure.

Again, both Federal and Local Ministers did absolutely nothing to assist us except provide us with more of their typical platitudes..Moving on

The facility was more interested in commercial returns instead of supporting the Institute.

At the asking price of \$155,000 per annum, no community NFP group could ever hope to use any space at this facility.



cont...

CLARKFIELD PRIMARY SCHOOL ASBESTOS

This was also an interesting one.

'Try the Clarkfield Primary School as its no longer in use', suggested a Macedon Ranges Councillor.

Images on the internet looked promising and we were getting excited that a new opportunity had shown itself.

That is until our site inspection.

Rotten decking you could fall through, Asbestos warning signs plastered all over the site,

every window glass pane smashed with all internal walls destroyed..

In other words, the site was only worthy of being both condemned and bulldozed.

There were also security concerns due to the sites remote location. Thanks but no thanks.

We will continue in part 2 next month...



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

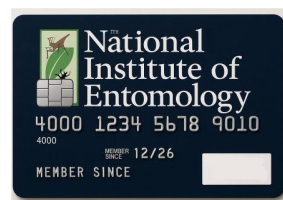
keeping you updated on Institute News.

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:000468

The family Acroceridae are an unusual group of flies. *Ogcodes canberranus* (Paramonov, 1957) is a cosmopolitan genus of small-headed flies belonging to this family.

About 90 species have been described for the genus. It is the most common and speciose genus in its family. These flies are endoparasitoids of ground-dwelling entelegyne spiders.

Flies in this genus can be distinguished from other genera in the family Acroceridae by the following combination of characteristics:

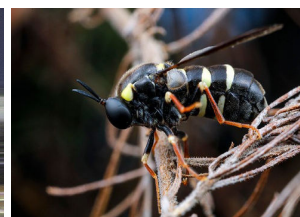
Antennae positioned on the ventral surface of the head, slightly above the mouth.
Tibiae lacking apical spurs.
Eyes always holoptic.

Short, rod-like antennal flagellum.
Mouthparts hidden by a membrane.
Reduced wing venation.

Soon after mating, females lay their eggs around dead twigs. These eggs are brown or black in color, and usually under 0.35 millimeters in length.

Larvae are endoparasitoids in spiders. Upon emerging, planidial larvae wait to come in contact with a host spider. If a host is not found, the larvae can move to nearby sites by springing into the air or moving similarly to an inchworm. If a host is found, the larva will typically enter it through the abdomen, or occasionally through the intersegmental membranes of the legs.

Upon attaching to the inside of the host, the larva will molt twice at a rate that depends on the developmental pace of the host. The site of attachment is in an air pocket be-



tween the lamellae of the spider's book lungs. The third-instar larva will consume most of the host.

Millipedes and Molecules Discovery

Millipedes, often dismissed as creepy crawlies, may hold the secret to future painkillers and neurological drugs.

Researchers at Virginia Tech discovered unique alkaloid compounds in the defensive secretions of a native millipede species. These complex molecules, which cause disorientation in ants, interact with human neuroreceptors linked to pain

and cognition.

By decoding these natural chemical defenses, scientists could open a new path toward innovative drug therapies, though challenges remain in producing the compounds at scale.



Millipedes could hold the secret to effective pain receptor blocking

From the Forum - Static Worm

'The parasitic roundworm *Steinernema carpocapsae*, which live in soil, are already known to leap some 25 times their body length into the air. They do this by curling into a loop and springing in the air, rotating hundreds of times a second.

If the nematode lands successfully, it releases bacteria that kills the insect within a couple of days upon which the worm feasts and lays its eggs. At the same time, if it fails to attach to a host then it faces death itself.'

'To investigate, researchers at Emory University and the Uni-

versity of California, Berkeley, [conducted a series of experiments](#), in which they used high-speed microscopy techniques to film the worms as they leapt onto a fruit fly.'

'They found that a charge of a few hundred volts – similar to that generated in the wild by an insect's wings rubbing against ions in the air – fosters a negative charge on the worm, creating an attractive force with the positively charged fly.'

'Carrying out simulations of the worm jumps, they found that without any electrostatics, only 1 in 19 worm trajectories suc-

on the worm, creating an attractive force with the positively charged fly.'

'Carrying out simulations of the worm jumps, they found that without any electrostatics, only 1 in 19 worm trajectories successfully reached their target. The greater the voltage, however, the greater the chance of landing. For 880 V, for example, the probability was 80%.'



The Roundworm can be seen at the very bottom centre.

New Institute Services

IDENTIFICATION SERVICE

Many insects are well known and common but collectors and members of the public come across species that are totally strange and new.

If you require an identification and can use Zoom Video Conferencing, your personal entomologists are here to help guide you in getting an identification.

Just book a suitable day and time by contacting the Institute or visit [here](#).



The identification of insects can be a complicated and specialized activity. This new service offers assistance to gardeners, hobbyists and environmental consultants.

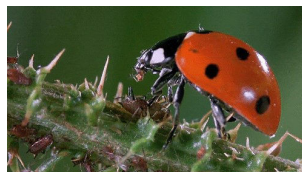
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NATURAL PEST CONTROL

The majority of insects and related invertebrates can be controlled with a variety of natural and environmentally safe methods.

If you believe that you have a pest problem, the Institute can advise you on the best course of action without the need for expensive commercial pest control.

Contact the Institute on admin@entoinsitute.org or call our Main Line on 03 7038 9452 to discuss your pest issue and we will offer an effective plan in order to get the best natural outcome. [Details Here](#)



Natural pest control can easily be achieved and requires no chemical applications..a good thing.

PATHWAYS

PATHWAYS

Pathways is a National Institute of Entomology Foundation sponsored program for students aiming to achieve either their ASSOCIATE CERTIFICATE OF ENTOMOLOGY, BACHELORS CERTIFICATE, GRADUATE CERTIFICATE or DIPLOMA OF APPLIED ENTOMOLOGY.

All required Courses and Modules for each degree have been condensed together under one discounted payment option. Available fee reductions for each unit of study are listed [here](#):

Associate Certificate of Entomology - Pathways Fee: \$1100.00 (A fee reduction of \$130.00)

Bachelors Certificate of Entomology - Pathways Fee: \$3100.00 (A fee reduction of \$550.00)

Graduate Certificate of Entomology - Pathways Fee: \$5900.00 (A fee reduction of \$850.00)

Diploma of Applied Entomology - Pathways Fee: \$10350.00 (A fee reduction of \$1100.00)



Weaver Ants May Transform Robotics

Weaver ants have solved a problem that has plagued human teams for centuries: individuals contribute less to tasks when more people join in.

New research published in *Current Biology* on August 12 shows individual weaver ants instead get stronger as their group grows.

"Each individual ant almost doubled their pulling force as team size increased - they actually get better at working together as the group gets bigger," says lead author Madelyne Stewardson from Macquarie University. The longstanding problem in human teams was first published by French engineer Max Ringelmann in 1913 who meas-

ured students pulling on ropes and found that while total force increased as more people joined in, each individual's contribution actually decreased.

The study shows weaver ants form super-efficient teams in which individuals actually increase their contributions as teams grow bigger, defying the declining performance affecting human teams.



Weaver ants increase their effort as their team size grows, using a clever pull-and-anchor method that makes them super-efficient builders and potential models for better robot teamwork. Credit: Shutterstock

Cont...

These tiny, tree-dwelling ants (*Oecophylla smaragdina*) found in tropical Africa, Asia and Australia, are known for their nest-building behaviors, forming living chains to roll leaves and glue them with silk from their larvae.

Stewardson and behavioral ecologist Dr Chris Reid from Macquarie's School of Natural Sciences worked with an international team to measure the force different sized ant teams could apply while building nests. The researchers set up experiments enticing weaver ant colonies to form pulling chains to move an artificial leaf

connected to a force meter.

"The ants split their work into two jobs: some actively pull while others act like anchors to store that pulling force," says Stewardson.

How the ant team makes it work:

Co-lead author Dr Daniele Carlesso from the University of Konstanz developed a theory called the 'force ratchet' to explain this mechanism.

"Ants at the back of chains

stretch out their bodies to resist and store the pulling force, while ants at the front keep actively pulling," says Dr Carlesso.



"The ants split their work into two jobs: some actively pull while others act like anchors to store that pulling force,"

Cont...

Dr David Labonte from Imperial College London, co-author on the paper, says the team found this method was key to increasing the contribution per individual as the team got bigger.

"Longer chains of ants have more grip on the ground than single ants, so they can better resist the force of the leaf pulling back," he says.

Dr Reid says the discovery could help scientists design better robot teams. Current robots only output the same force when working in teams

as when alone.

"Programming robots to adopt ant-inspired cooperative strategies could allow teams of autonomous robots to work together more efficiently," says Dr Reid.



112 Million Year Old Time Capsule Unearthed

Scientists have uncovered the first South American amber deposits containing preserved insects in a quarry in Ecuador, according to a study published in *Communications Earth & Environment*. The discovery captures a vivid picture of a 112-million-year-old forest that once thrived on the ancient supercontinent Gondwana and opens new doors for exploring a long-overlooked prehistoric ecosystem. Amber (fossilized tree resin) has been found in samples dating back as far as 320 million years, but it became far more common between 120 million and 70 million years ago, during the Cretaceous era (143.1 million to 66 million years ago).

These ancient resins sometimes contain "bio-inclusions" -- trapped remains of plants or animals -- that offer rare, detailed glimpses of life forms such as insects and flowers that are not usually preserved as fossils.

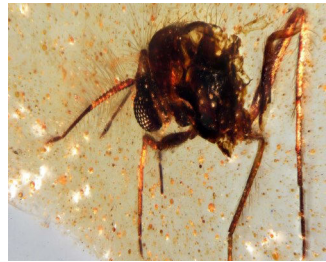
Until now, nearly all known major amber deposits were located in the Northern Hemisphere, leaving scientists with limited insight into what Southern Hemisphere ecosystems looked like during the time when the continents were beginning to separate from Gondwana.

To investigate, Xavier Delclòs and his research team examined amber and surrounding rock samples collected from the Genoveva quarry in Ecuador. The amber, dated to roughly 112 million years ago, belongs to the Holín Formation, a sedimentary layer that stretches across Ecuador's Oriente Basin.

The team identified two distinct kinds of amber: one formed underground near the roots of resin-producing plants, and another that developed in the open air.

In addition, the rock surrounding the amber contained numerous plant fossils such as spores, pollen, and other botanical traces.

According to the researchers, the characteristics of the fossils indicate that the amber originated in a warm, humid forest filled with dense vegetation and resin-producing trees in southern Gondwana. They emphasize that this rare find provides a crucial new resource for understanding life and biodiversity during this key period in Earth's history.



This 112-million-year-old midge was one of the many insects discovered in the amber. Credit: © Mónica Solórzano-Kraemer

From the Forum - The Disappearing Insects

A new study from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill shows that insect populations are rapidly declining even in relatively undisturbed landscapes, raising concerns about the health of ecosystems that depend on them.

Keith Sockman, associate professor of biology at UNC-Chapel Hill, quantified the abundance of flying insects during 15 seasons between 2004 and 2024 on a subalpine meadow in Colorado, a site with 38 years of weather data and minimal direct human impact. He discovered an average annual decline of 6.6% in insect abundance, amounting to a 72.4% drop over the 20-year period. The study also found that this steep decline is associated with rising summer temperatures.

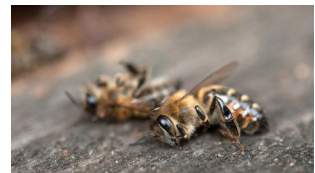
"Insects have a unique, if inauspicious position in the biodiversity crisis due to the ecological services, such as nutrient cycling and pollination, they provide and to their vulnerability to environmental change," Sockman said. "Insects are necessary for terrestrial and fresh-water ecosystems to function."

The findings address a critical gap in global insect research. While many reports of insect declines focus on habitats altered by human activity, few examine populations in relatively pristine areas. This study demonstrates that dramatic losses can occur even where direct human impacts are minimal, suggesting climate change may be a key driver.

"Several recent studies report significant insect declines across a variety of human-altered ecosystems, particularly in North America and Europe," Sockman said. "Most such studies report on ecosystems that have been directly impacted by humans or are surrounded by impacted areas, raising questions about insect declines and their drivers in more natural areas."

Sockman emphasizes the urgency of these results for biodiversity conservation: "Mountains are host to disproportionately high numbers of locally adapted endemic

species, including insects. Thus, the status of mountains as biodiversity hotspots may be in jeopardy if the declines shown here reflect trends broadly." This research highlights the need for more comprehensive monitoring of insect populations in a variety of landscapes and adds urgency to addressing climate change. By showing that even remote ecosystems are not immune, the study underscores the global scale of the biodiversity crisis.



Flying insects in a pristine Colorado meadow have declined by over 70% in just 20 years. Rising temperatures may be driving a biodiversity crisis even in untouched ecosystems. Credit: Shutterstock

Monarch Populations In Decline

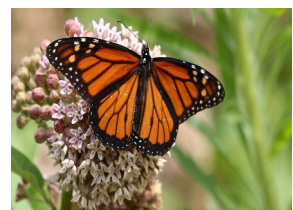
The migratory monarch butterfly has joined the endangered species list.

On Thursday (July 21), the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) listed the butterfly, a subspecies of monarch (*Danaus plexippus*) as endangered, indicating that the subspecies is facing a high risk of extinction in the wild. The main threats to the migratory monarch are

habitat loss, pesticide and herbicide use, and climate change.

"It is difficult to watch monarch butterflies and their extraordinary migration teeter on the edge of collapse, but there are signs of hope," Anna Walker, a member of the IUCN's butterfly and moth specialist group and a species survival officer at the New Mexico BioPark Society,

said in a statement. "So many people and organizations have come together to try and protect this butterfly and its habitats."



Monarch butterfly (*Danaus plexippus*) on a milkweed plant flower in Ontario, Canada. (Image credit: Photo by Creative Touch Imaging Ltd./NurPhoto via Getty Images)

An Expo Exhibitors Story - EarthlyDesignz

Our small business EarthlyDesignz has been at the National Entomology Expo for two years now. Previously I had a site at the expo with my small business Insectpets where I sold mostly stick insects and a few other varieties of invertebrates for pets, and at the same time I tried to instil in the purchasers, a wonder and respect of the natural environment. I then sold my business because I was at retirement age and

wanted to travel Australia, and not be caring for insects 7 days a week. I still liked talking to people and knew there was a demand from people, city dwellers in particular for natural items to furnish enclosures with. I live on 60 acres and have ready access to interesting branches, stones, lichen and bark. At the same time my creative daughter, Katrina saw the opportunity to re-visit her

love of making silver gemstone jewellery by making jewellery featuring insects. So from here EarthlyDesignz emerged. In the mix we also delved into 3D printing and print a variety of invertebrates and their predators. We are always on the lookout for new creative ideas to add variety to our site at the Expo.



The mum and daughter team of Marg and Katrina that run the EarthlyDesignz operation.

Institute Pioneers - Ms Erin Thompson

Ms Erin Thompson began her association with the National Institute of Entomology in 1997 back when it operated as the Insectarium of Victoria next to the Woodend railway station.

Erin was the Insectariums very first employee and held the important role of Assistant Curator at the centre.

She was given the important responsibility for the husbandry and care of all live and static exhibits.

This included feeding, watering and cleaning out of all insect, invertebrate enclosures as well as maintaining accurate data records for all species under her care.

Many living species on display at the time had never been publicly

exhibited before.

Because of this, the successful keeping and potential breeding in captivity of many of the live species on display at the former Insectarium of Victoria fell onto Erins shoulders.

Through her perseverance and observations, Erin was fundamental in the establishment of the husbandry methods the National Institute of Entomology uses to this day.

Of special note is that due to her meticulous record keeping and monitoring, Erin was key to the centre's successful breeding in captivity for the first time anywhere in the world of the endangered Giant Tasmanian Freshwater Crayfish *Astacopsis gouldi*.

This listed threatened species was acquired and transported by the Insectarium of Victoria for the first time onto mainland Australia from Tasmania and Erin was the primary curator responsible for the keeping of these irreplaceable Insectarium of Victoria specimens.



In a worlds first, *Astacopsis gouldi*, The Giant Tasmanian Freshwater Crayfish was successfully bred in captivity in 1998.

Cont...

Her data records are still in use today and form an invaluable repository of irreplaceable husbandry information.

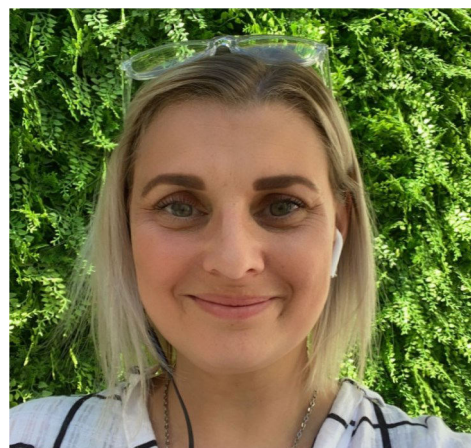
Other duties Erin undertook was the catalogue entries for the very first Insectarium of Victoria Research Library database.

She added hundreds of entries at the time and these records were incorporated into the Institutes New Library Database in July 2022.

Erin always brought a positive and enthusiastic attitude to the centre and this reflected on everyone she came into contact with each day. Today, she continues her association with the Institute as a trusted and valued Board Member and it is a pleasure to still have Erin contrib-

uting to the new National Institute of Entomology organization after so many years.

Thank you so much Erin..



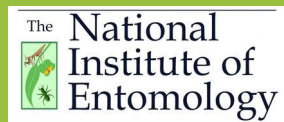
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If you are interested in advertising here, please contact the institute on:
admin@entoinsitute.org

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.

The role of the Committee 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.

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

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