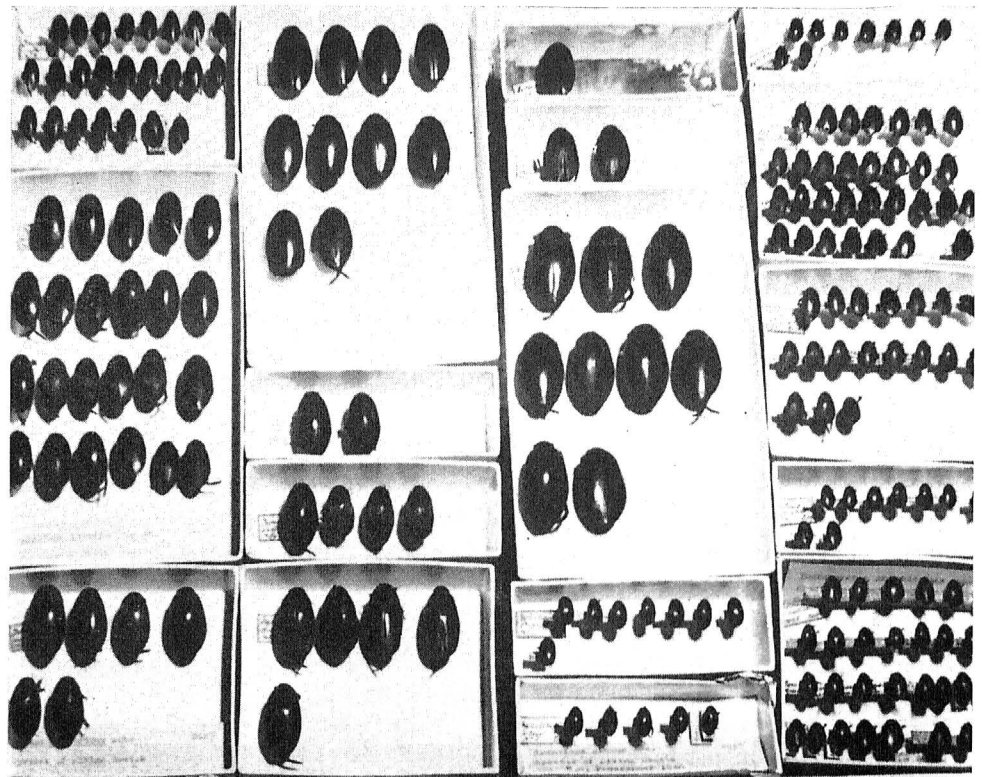


These water beetles look alike but have slight differences. Wilbur Enns, entomological museum director, displays a case of moths from the South Pacific



Those Fascinating Insects

Bugs are just bugs to most people, but not to Wilbur R. Enns, director of the entomological museum at the University. After twenty years of close acquaintance with insects, Dr. Enns has found that they have personalities as varied and as curious as do human beings.

A museum visitor can be both entertained and informed by hearing of the peculiarities of some common insects. He learns that most bugs turn up their heels and die from a dose of nicotine. The cigarette beetle, however, thrives on the stuff, merrily making tunnels through Havana cigars or North Carolina cigarettes, showing no preference for brand names. Nothing would please him more than a luscious dip of snuff.

Another insect with a taste for flavor is the red pepper beetle, whose favorite dish is obvious. But the one with an appetite for lethal doses is the drugstore beetle, which feeds on anything from penicillin through various kinds of poisonous drugs without any noticeable after-effects.

Then there is the death watch beetle, which derived its name because of its habit of banging its head against the wood as it moved about in the walls of an old house. In the quiet of a wake, neighbors sitting with a corpse heard this ticking in the wall, and it sounded like a watch. So this poor little bug, who banged his head as often when people were alive as dead, became known as the death watch beetle.

The red-shouldered leaf beetle reposing peacefully in a glass case could tell a strange tale of family feeding habits. The adult feeds on leaves, but its young grubs live in the nest of ants. Since ants are very particular about their nests, the question is, how do the little grubs get in there? Go not to the ant, but to the beetle for the answer. The female carefully extrudes an egg and catches it with her hind feet. Then holding it, she decorates it with a secretion of waxy scales until it resembles a seed. This she drops where the ants will find it. They mistake it for a seed, take it to their nest



Three wildlife majors bone up for a practical quiz in Aquatic Entomology.



This graduate student's study of 75 types of water beetles will result in his doctoral dissertation.

By VIVIAN HANSBROUGH

and store it, along with the rest of their winter supply. There the grubby sluggard grows, feeding on the ants' food.

Actually, a very small portion of Dr. Enns' time is consumed in escorting visitors around the museum. A more important part of his job is to identify strange insects mailed by persons worried about the crawling creatures' influence on Missouri crops. Using 25,000 specimens in the museum collection for reference, he decides whether the unidentified bugs are expensive pests or innocent bystanders.

Only one-tenth of one per cent of all the insects of the world are harmful, yet this small percentage destroys one-tenth of all the crops that man produces. In cotton, every seventh potential bale goes to feed the boll weevil. While some insects are man's most destructive enemies, others are his most valuable allies. People could not get along on this earth without the activity of insects in pollinating fruit, vegetable and forage crops and in controlling harmful insects.

The entomology department of the University has a staff of twelve teachers who train agriculture and forestry students to recognize the most prevalent of 15,000 types of insects found in Missouri. In addition to local examples, the museum contains many exotic specimens.

"Why do you have these foreign insects?" is a ques-

tion asked frequently by visitors. Dr. Enns explains that airplanes pick up unwanted insects, although customs officials are extraordinarily efficient at detection and elimination of such cargo. Foreign pests would be ruinous under conditions where natural enemies are not present to keep them under control. Therefore, the museum has representatives of foreign species for identification purposes.

Laboratories in the entomology department are equipped with enough microscopes for each member of a class to examine under a powerful lens the specimens he is to classify. By the end of the basic course, Applied Entomology, each student brings in his collection of at least fifty different kinds of insects, which is added to the accumulation in the museum.

Each year some three hundred different boys take courses in entomology at the University. They will become veterinarians, vocational agriculture teachers, county agents, foresters, beekeepers, high school science teachers, managers of fisheries. Some of them are foreign students who will return to their native countries to practice what they have learned in America. All of them will be more alert to the dangers and benefits of various insects after their study of entomology.

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