

The Light Trap

Newsletter of the
Frost Entomological Museum
Summer 2021



Spiders!

This summer the museum has been preparing for a fall course called 'Spiders!' (ENT 497). With help from our department's post docs, grad students, and some enthusiastic undergrads already enrolled in the course, we've been sampling spiders each month across 5 different local habitats. Students in the course will be using the specimens collected to learn about spider diversity, adaptive traits, evolution, behavior, and ecology of spiders.



Top Left: Eric Yip looks in a sweep net while Andy Deans waxes poetic about regional mygalomorphs. **Top Right:** Spiders being collected using a beat sheet. **Middle:** Sheet web built by a Linyphiid spider, which has two layers of webbing. **Bottom Left:** An orbweaver from the family Araneidae. **Bottom Right:** Students sifting through the leaf litter to find litter dwelling spiders.

Hexapod Haiku Challenge 2021



In June we announced the selection of outstanding haiku from this year's Hexapod Haiku Challenge. More than 250 haiku were submitted, with some from as far as Yukon Territory, Canada and Canberra, Australia! Part of our mission at the Frost is to foster a sense of curiosity in people about the natural world. We strive to make this happen, so thank you to the participants that sent in kind words and expressed that this activity helped them connect to insects and nature! Thanks also to [Anne Burgevin](#) and [Dr. Kadeem Gilbert](#) for help organizing and blind-judging this year's contest. If you'd like to read some of the fantastic haiku submitted this year — [visit the announcement](#) on our blog.

A Successful Thesis

Denise Montelongo successfully defended her thesis and has earned her master's degree! Her research helped clarify the community composition and structure inside galls created by *Philonix nigra*, and also included the description of a new species in the genus *Synergus*. She lent a helping hand with lots of museum activities, produced an excellent thesis rich in natural history, and deposited truly immaculate voucher specimens — which are critical for making arthropod based research verifiable and repeatable. We are all very proud and know she will continue to do excellent work in the future. We will miss you, Denise. Congratulations!!



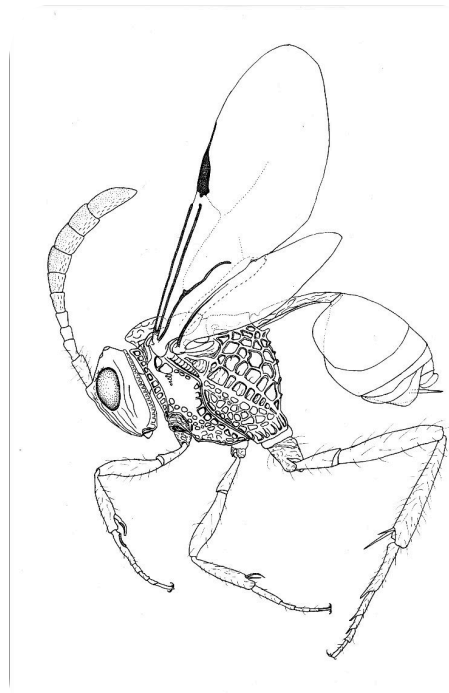
Left: Denise! **Right:** One of the *Synergus nigra* specimens vouchered from Denise's research.

Reopening the Public Space

It's finally happening! Penn State is planning to return to normal, on-campus learning for fall 2021. In line with this, the Frost will reopen the first week of the fall semester — on Monday August 23rd. We are so excited to welcome back guests. Stop in, we have installed new exhibits for visitors to see, including one on the spotted lanternfly and one on pollination!



Figures



We've begun the annual refresh of our insect diversity lab manual, just in time for the fall semester. This time the focus is on *figures*. In the past we used home-made micrographs to illustrate key diagnostic features of insect families. Although detailed and accurate, diagnostic features in these photographs can sometimes be lost among the complexity of other features in the image. Line illustrations, on the other hand, might be old-fashioned, but they can effectively highlight important characteristics in a way that photography cannot. Fortunately, the Biodiversity Heritage Library has numerous line drawings that can be used for this purpose. We will also have to supplement with our own! Check out [this post on our blog](#), for more details.

Above: A line drawing which highlights characteristic punctures on the thorax and wing venation. Illustrated by Dr. Andrew Deans.

Funding for a Post-Baccalaureate position!

This funding was recently secured through NSF's Research Experience for Post-Baccalaureate Students (REPS) program. The program is designed to provide research opportunities for students whose STEM research experience plans were sidelined due to the pandemic. Antonio Casadei, who was working remotely with the museum throughout his senior year at Penn State, will be returning to help reveal new species of gall wasp species through DNA barcoding as part of an [ongoing project deciphering the evolution of galling wasps](#).

Keep an eye out for the next *The Light Trap* in the fall

If you are interested in hearing about specific topics or activities, please let us know!

Become a Friend of the Frost

By becoming a Friend, you equip the museum with the tools needed for *collections care*, provide resources for *student engagement*, and helps fund the *rotation of new exhibits* into the museum. [Visit our website to learn more.](#)

Your support helps us better engage the public, grow and maintain the collection, and provide opportunities to undergraduate students at Penn State



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