

Enabling Natural History Outreach to Underserved Audiences 2015 Follow-Up Report to the Center for the Study of Diversity

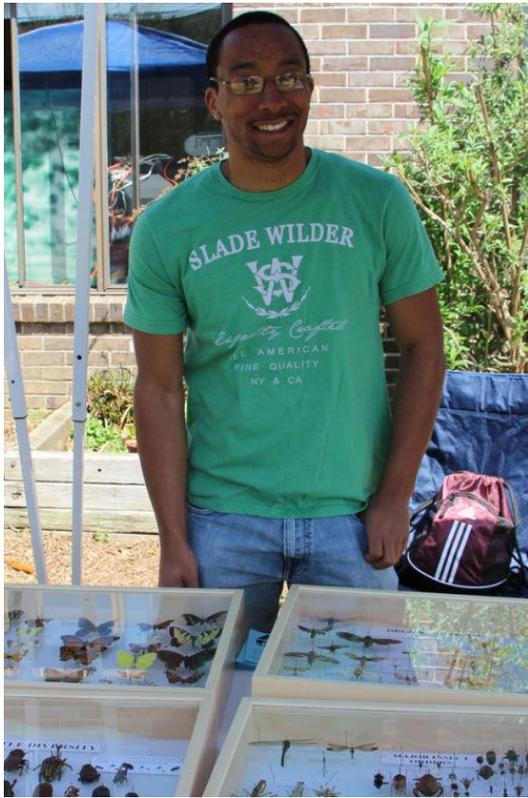
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We applied for the Center for the Study of Diversity Graduate Research Grant in December 2012 on behalf of the Department of Entomology and Wildlife Ecology Outreach Club. Our project, *Enabling Natural History Outreach to Underserved Audiences*, aimed to provide engaging outreach programs to communities that typically do not have many opportunities to explore the natural sciences. The Outreach Club at that time was already very active, conducting educational programs for a broad range of diverse audiences, but limited by the poor condition of educational materials. The focal point of outreach programs was a teaching insect collection which had not been updated since the 1970s. Many of the insect specimens were damaged from decades' worth of frequent handling and transport, and were at risk of incurring further damage due to the dilapidated condition of the drawers used to store and display them.

Once having secured \$503.56 through the generosity of the CSD, we quickly went to work purchasing new insect specimens and new drawers. We purchased all of the materials from a reputable biological supply company, BioQuip, on February 1, 2013, and volunteers from the Outreach Club put in a cumulative 20 hours in assembling the displays to make them both instructive and visually appealing. With the new materials obtained through the grant, we were able to create duplicates of the most popular displays to accommodate overlapping loan/outreach requests from different institutions, which was vital in ensuring that no request went unanswered.

The drawers were immediately put to use in March 2013 and have been an essential part of every outreach program the department has completed since then. Positive feedback to the new materials was instantaneous—they were enjoyed by program coordinators and participants alike. We are confident that we met our project's dissemination goals of including the new educational materials in our many varied outreach programs. Our list of participating institutions has continued to grow in the intervening years; we are pleased to report that the Outreach Club has conducted programs across four states (Delaware, Maryland, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania) at a diverse array of institutions and special events, including schools (preschool through high school), summer camps, detention centers, nursing homes, youth clubs (e.g., 4H, Scouts), festivals, zoos, and garden centers. The insect displays are crucial in providing a highly visual, hands-on component to outreach presentations, accommodating a variety of learning styles as well as audiences with hearing impairment or limited English proficiency.

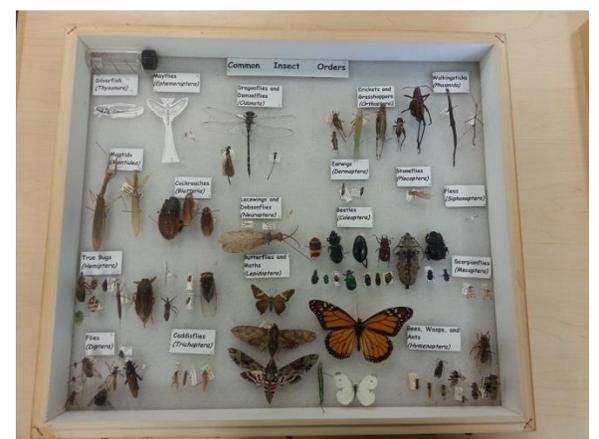
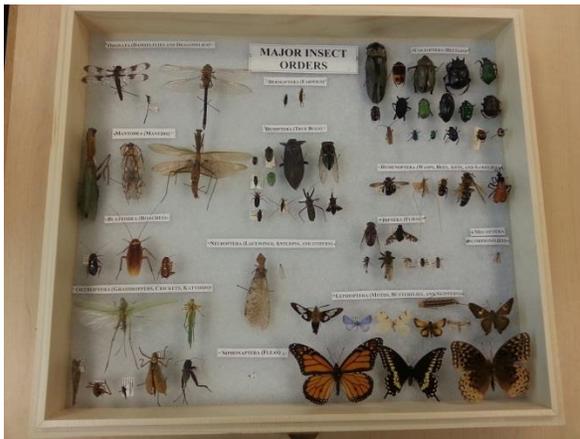
Our sustainability goals entailed ensuring that the Outreach Club would have durable, improved educational materials sufficient to enable them to keep providing the same high-quality, individualized programs we provided in the past, for years to come. We are convinced that these goals were met. Both of us who applied for this grant have long since completed our master's programs, but through our continued contact with current faculty and students, we know that the teaching insect collection is being used and is greatly appreciated. We are deeply grateful to the CSD for their support of this project. Through this support, we were able to communicate the importance of insect diversity to countless program participants, perhaps igniting a spark that will develop into a lifelong interest in the natural world or helping to steer young minds toward a career in the sciences. At minimum, we provided them with mentally stimulating educational displays that are equally accessible to a wide diversity of audiences.



Outreach Club member (left) and program participants (right) at a public event (April 2013).



Before and after: an insect display from the Outreach Club collection showing extensive damage wrought by pests over the years (left), and a new & improved drawer assembled thanks to funding from the CSD (right).



A selection of our most popular insect displays, made possible by the support of the CSD.