

# Bugged Out

ONE OF THE RAREST COLLECTIONS IN NEW JERSEY RELOCATES ITS 200,000 SPECIMENS.

**W**hen entomology professor Frank Carle heard about plans to demolish John B. Smith Hall in New Brunswick, he immediately thought of the 200,000-specimen insect museum inside. Ironically, the building—the former home of the Department of Entomology—had been condemned, in part, because of a termite infestation.

The museum houses “specimens from New Jersey that help us trace 120 years of entomology history,” says Carle, and also includes interesting foreign insects, such as a



specimens from Australia and Africa.

“So I said, ‘Not so fast.’”

Carle, the museum’s cocurator, went to work to find a room large enough to accommodate the collection’s hundreds of neatly labeled, glass-covered drawers filled with some 70,000 bees, ants, and wasps; 60,000 beetles; 30,000 moths and butterflies; and 40,000 other specimens. He found such a space near Smith Hall in McLean Research Lab, off Georges Road in New Brunswick.

“We refer to the collection as a museum, although it’s not the kind of place that’s suitable for school

to state fairs and 4-H clubs. It has also been instrumental in studying mosquitoes that transmit the West Nile virus, ticks that cause Lyme disease, and southern pine beetles, which have destroyed thousands of trees in the Pinelands in recent years.

The museum got its start in the late 1880s, when the Rev. George Hulst and John B. Smith, founding members of the entomology department, decided to combine their private collections. The insects nearly went up in flames in 1903 when a fire broke out in New Jersey Hall, but Smith and his students hauled them out of the burning building. The museum moved to an old factory that became Smith Hall in the late 1930s and stayed behind when the department relocated to Blake Hall in 1998.

“Now that the building named in Smith’s honor is being demolished, we hope to name the museum after him,” says department chair James Lashomb. Smith, the state’s first entomologist, introduced mosquito control methods in New Jersey and pioneered techniques to save crops from being consumed by insects. His strategies were considered so effective that the federal government sent him to Panama to help contain yellow fever during the building of the Panama Canal. Says Lashomb, “Smith’s contributions were enormous. We need to recognize them.”

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rare dragonfly from the high mountains of the Himalayas, a damselfly from Venezuela’s Angel Falls, and

groups,” says Carle. The collection is mainly used for teaching and research in ecology, evolution, and behavioral studies, and making loans

