Date:
Location:

Weather:

NAME:

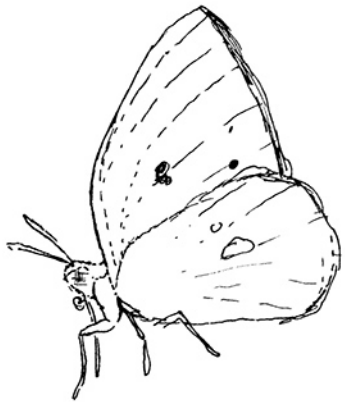
What was it doing?

What stands out about it?

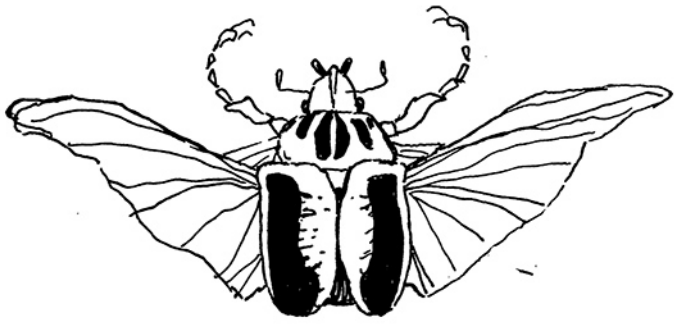
What is it related to?

Were other insects nearby?

Was it eating?

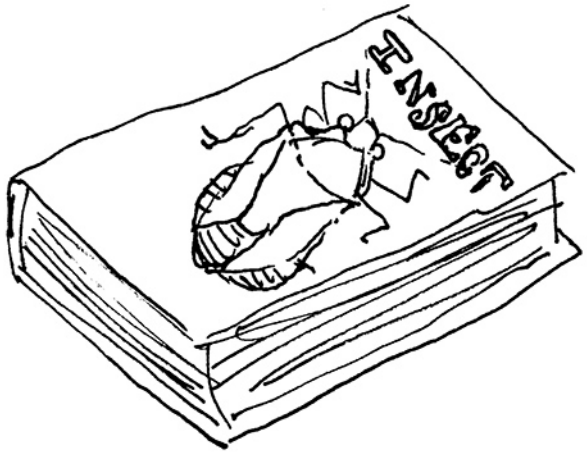


How to Begin a Bug Collection



Insect collections can be made very inexpensively, providing anyone the ability to have a long-lasting collection that allows them to study visual differences between insects as well as documenting observations about the insects you find in an environment.

You should never touch, grab, or otherwise disturb any insect you don't know the identity of. It's always best to err on the side of caution and choosing to document observations from a distance until you get a proper ID to ensure that an insect is not harming you or that you do not accidentally kill a protected species.



FIELD GUIDE

DATE:
LOCATION:

WEATHER:

NAME:

WHAT WAS IT DOING?

WHAT STANDS OUT ABOUT IT?

WHAT IS IT RELATED TO?

WERE OTHER INSECTS NEARBY?

WAS IT EATING?

DATE: 5/19/2019
LOCATION: TOM GRAHAM LEARNING GARDEN
CORPUS CHRISTI, TEXAS
WEATHER:

NAME:

WHAT WAS IT DOING?

WHAT STANDS OUT ABOUT IT?

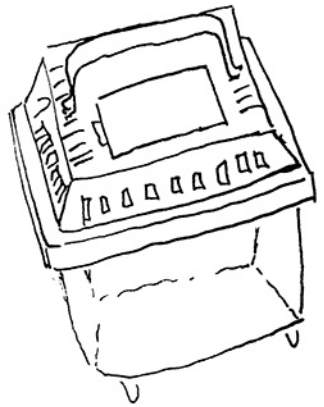
WHAT IS IT RELATED TO?

WERE OTHER INSECTS NEARBY?

WAS IT EATING?

Non-lethal methods:

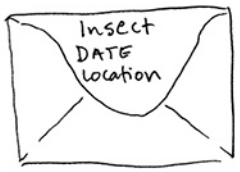
You can just as easily collect insects you find dead instead of killing alive ones. They might be imperfect specimens, but they still serve a purpose to a collection and are just as engaging. Some insects fair well with live observation, most commonly caterpillars. With this method, you get to watch feeding and living behaviors of the insect, and in the case of a caterpillar, the different life cycles. From there, you can release the insect back into the wild after you're done watching it, or you can take care of it until it dies naturally and add to your collection.



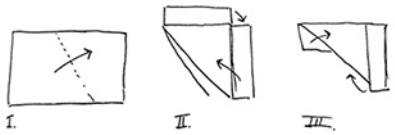
Crumpled paper towel, dampened with alcohol of choice

Killing insects:

Quickly kill in the field with alcohol or freeze later. Freezing is gradual, first putting the insect "to sleep" while alcohol spontaneously kills the insect. The method you choose will depend on personal preference, what you have readily available, and the type of insect.



Envelope



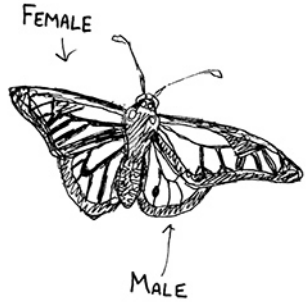
Paper triangle pattern from Roger Tory Peterson field guide

Soft bodied arthropods like spiders and insects like caterpillars do best stored in 70-90% alcohol/isopropyl alcohol. Hard bodied insects like june beetles can be dried out and stored in a box, while frail specimens like butterflies should either be stored pinned or folded in little paper triangles.

You can make an insect collection storage box out of a cardboard box, shadow box, jewelry box, tackle box, or any other covered container. The ideal insect collection would be one that's air tight, but mindfulness and maintenance will help even the cheapest made collection last for a very long time. Advanced collectors will want to pin their specimens to help keep them stable and frail appendages (like legs and antennae) free from any kind of impact to minimize breakage. A piece of styrofoam can be glued or placed at the bottom of the box for the pins to stick into. Containers like jewelry boxes small parts organizers that have individual slots are perfect for storing insects unpinned or organizing miscellaneous body parts.

Pests can destroy an insect collection; the first line of defense would be to frequently look and maintain your collection. Moth balls are often used to dissuade pests, while occasionally freezing the entire collection will kill off any existent pests or eggs.

COMMON NAME: MONARCH BUTTERFLY
SCIENTIFIC NAME: Danaus plexippus



Labels:

Labelling is the most important part to an insect collection, it provides the historical context on the day it was caught. You will want to label the name and the date and location caught. This label should be near the insect, either attached to the pin (if the collection is pinned) or attached/inside of the box clearly marking which insect it goes to.

Journal:

A journal is a great tool to compile not only the label information, but any observations both in the field and at home. Take time to consider why the insect was where you found it. Was it eating? Was it competing with another insect? Another organism? At what stage of life is it in? Drawing is also helpful to more easily distinguish the features you see, especially when comparing multiple specimens of the same species.