



Program Subject to Change. Last Updated 8/19/26

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Tuesday, August 18

4:00pm-6:00pm

Pre-Conference Meet and Greet - Sundance Café

Are you already at the resort? Want to meet up with some colleagues for some preconference social time? Please join us for some chips, salsa and drinks.

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Wednesday, August 19

6:00am - 8:00am Registration - Presidio Registration Desk

1:30pm - 5:30pm Registration - Presidio Registration Desk

FIELD TRIPS - Pre-registration required. All field trips will meet at Presidio Registration Desk. To help keep the cost of the field trips down and to be sympathetic to those that do not feel comfortable riding in closed vehicles with large groups of people, we will be asking for volunteers to help with carpools for the field trips. All field trips will be supplied with light snacks and water. Please bring a refillable water bottle, best to start with it filled!

6:15am-4:00pm Adventure in the Rincons! East or West?

Led by Courtney Christie, Random Planet Art

Possibly the most underrated mountain range in the Tucson area, the Rincon mountains have so much to offer. From the western side of the range with incredible Saguaro-covered mountain foothills, to the eastern side with rolling grassland hills, manzanita, oak, and towering sycamores, the Rincon's boast an incredible diversity of plants, wildlife, and tons of invertebrates. The western side often has many traditional desert-dwelling invertebrates to go with its traditional Saguaro-covered landscape, while the eastern side is typically cooler due to its density of trees, and one can often find lubbers, butterflies, and occasionally Hercules beetles if they know where to look. There's not much that can't be seen in this special mountain range. Weather and road conditions will determine on which side of the mountain we will have our adventure!

If going to the Eastern Rincos, it will be a two-hour drive, 10mi of which will be on a dirt road, and it'll be a longer day-trip with a few stops when in Happy Valley. Road conditions will determine whether we go here or to the west side. West side is an hour drive and there will likely be more sun exposure. Regardless of side, please bring sun protection, snacks, and plenty of water. No collecting if in Saguaro National Park.

No collecting - 12 participants

6:30am-4:00pm Now That's What I Call Buggin 33

Led by Tad Yankoski, Sophia M. Sachs Butterfly House and Steven Barney, Beetle Source

Like your favorite song that hits *just* right after a long day at work, we'll visit some of Southern Arizona's greatest ~~hits~~ locations for seeing native insects. Whether it's your 1st or 33rd IECC field trip, we'll visit locations in Southern Arizona that will make lasting memories, and where we'll surely see lots of great bugs. With scheduled visits to fan favorites like Box Canyon and Empire Ranch, plus some other surprises along the way, these locations are likely to produce insect hits like centipedes, vinegaroons, cactus longhorn beetles, velvet ants, bees, tarantula hawks, tarantulas, scorpions, big beetles, butterflies and much, much more. Responsible collecting allowed.

Wear closed-toe shoes and bring plenty of water. Participants may be exposed to extreme heat temperatures and sun, so hats, sunglasses, and sunscreen are recommended. Expect to traverse mild to medium off-road terrain.

Collecting allowed - 24 participants

6:45am-4:00pm South of the Santa Ritas

Led by Emma Califf, Bird Conservancy of the Rockies

Join Wildlife Biologist Emma Califf for a day exploring the Santa Rita foothills. Ranging from arid grassland to Madrean woodland, this region provides habitat to a large diversity of wildlife. In late August at the height of monsoon season, we're sure to see a wide variety of butterflies, beetles, and arachnids, in addition to the many reptiles and amphibians who find home in the Santa Rita Mountains.

Wear closed-toe shoes and bring plenty of water. Participants may be exposed to extreme heat temperatures and mild changes in elevation

No collecting - 12 participants

6:45am-3:00pm CANYONS AND SUCH = BUGS MUCH!

Led by Zack Lemann

It doesn't matter where you go during Arizona's monsoon season - and in fact, don't yet know where we'll head! - but if it's green space, the bugs should accommodate us. Natural spaces south of Tucson include a terrific number of habitats and a surprising diversity of impressive arthropods. From well-known desert denizens such as scorpions and centipedes to some perhaps more obscure insects and spiders, this trip will offer many opportunities to observe, collect, and learn about why this area of the country is so special to people who so admire the little things that run the world.

Collecting allowed - 12 participants

7:00am-4:00pm Mt. Lemmon Day Trip

Led by Irene Dickinson, University of Arizona

Climb through 6 life zones without leaving Arizona! Mt. Lemmon is Tucson's most iconic mountain, where you can experience the equivalent of driving from Mexico to Canada in under an hour. We'll start in classic Sonoran Desert scrub and ascend through oak woodlands all the way to alpine pine forests, each zone hosting completely different bug species. This is your chance to explore one of the Southwest's most biodiverse mountains.

The Mt Lemmon trip is mostly driving, but it is a long and windy road, so those who are prone to car sickness may want to reconsider or make arrangements to be more comfortable in the car.

No collecting- 12 participants

7:15am-4:00pm Saguaro National Park Madrona Pools

Led by Lucas Hetherington, Saguaro National Park

Take a trip to Saguaro National Park, where we will be granted access to a secluded area of the Rincon Mountains where perennial waters fill tinajas and support a wide variety of wild creatures in a unique habitat. Make sure to bring close-toed shoes and sun protection in addition to lots of snacks and water for this canyon adventure. After exploring the canyon, we will visit the Visitor Center and drive around the Cactus Forest Loop of Saguaro NP (time permitting).

Requires light off-trail hiking in hot conditions without access to facilities. Distances/elevations covered can be adapted based on the group.

No collecting- 11 participants

7:30am- 4:00pm Bugs, Birds and Bioblitzing

Led by Clayton Leopold, Moody Gardens

This field trip will be a blast of biodiversity! We'll start off at El Rio Preserve, a rich riparian habitat that attracts plenty of parched wildlife. With interest, we'll pop across the street to see Los Morteros Conservation Area, a well-preserved Hohokam village site. Then we'll head south along the Santa Cruz River to Sweetwater Wetlands- a true oasis in the desert and beautiful ecosystem. Over 300 species of birds have been documented at the Wetlands, and it's also full of bugs and occasional bobcats! As the day heats up, we will chase the cooler temperatures by heading up to Madera Canyon in the Santa Rita Mountains. One of the famed sky islands, you quickly transition between low desert habitats into pine forests. Opportunities to sample all habitats in between abound here. Kick back and enjoy the Santa Rita Lodge hummingbird feeders or hike up into the higher elevation forest; either option gives you a good sampling of the diversity the area has to offer. The whole day we'll be utilizing iNaturalist and eBird to log our nature sightings.

El Rio and Sweetwater Wetlands have packed dirt trails with very little incline; both have occasional benches and shade trees. There are refillable water stations and bathrooms. Madera Canyon has options to sit in the shade, hike on a trail, or hike on a paved street. It will be higher elevation and slightly cooler than in Tucson.

No collecting- 12 participants

8:00am-Noon Monarch Conservation at Reid Park Zoo

Led by Karen Kierstead, Reid Park Zoo

Reid Park Zoo would like to host a field trip where participants will tour the pollinator garden and learn how we use Nature's Notebook for monitoring. The visit will also include a presentation in our Conservation Learning Center on monarch conservation efforts, including tagging and tracking projects that the Zoo supports. In addition, participants will have the opportunity to view several invertebrate habitats and learn how these ambassador species are incorporated into our conservation education programs. After the presentation, guests are welcome to continue to explore the rest of the Zoo at their leisure.

No collecting- 12 participants

EVENING EVENTS

5:30pm - 9:00pm Welcome, Keynote Presentation, and Reception - Presidio Ballroom

IECC 2026 Keynote Speaker, Dr. Andy Quitmeyer, Dinalab

Dr. Andy Quitmeyer designs new ways to interact with the natural world. Quitmeyer has worked with large organizations like Cartoon Network, IDEO, and the Smithsonian, taught as a tenure-track professor, and even had his research turned into a television series called "Hacking the Wild." distributed by Discovery.

He now spends most of his time volunteering with smaller organizations and communities, and recently founded the field-station/makerspace, Digital Naturalism Laboratories (<https://www.dinalab.net/>). In the rainforest of Gamboa, Panama, Dinalab blends biological fieldwork and technological crafting with a community of local and international scientists, artists and engineers. Their current project is the open-source insect biodiversity monitor, the Mothbox (mothbox.org).

Mothbox is awesome! Dr. Andy's excitement is infectious! We can't wait for you all to meet him!

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Butterfly Farm - La Cruz, Guanacaste, Costa Rica

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Thursday, August 20

8:00am - 4:00pm Registration -- Registration may close during paper sessions and lunch.

8:00am - 4:00pm Silent Auction

8:00am - 4:00pm Please visit our Vendors.

MORNING WORKSHOPS

8:30am-11:30am Tools of the Trade

Location: Agave Ballroom

Led by Sarah Jenkins, Omaha's Henry Doorly Zoo & Aquarium

An opportunity for hands on experience with small tools and materials that can be used for invertebrate care, containment, shipping and habitats. The workshop will include instructions on how to modify off-the-shelf containers to make custom enclosures. Participants will be provided with lists of resources and vendors as well as sources for inexpensive or free materials. We will make small pieces with animal-safe epoxy and discuss the use of 3D printing.

8:30am-11:30am Building a BeeNBee not a Haunted House: Sustainable Management Practices for Building Solitary Bee Homes

Location: Joshua Tree

Led by Lindsie McCabe, Orchard Bee Association

The Orchard Bee Association will host a workshop on sustainable bee hotel management for zoos, highlighting the ecoBOB standard developed by the Orchard Bee Association backed by evidence-based research from university and federal Osmia researchers. These standards ensure safe, effective, and sustainable practices for maintaining healthy orchard bee populations. Experts discussed optimal bee

hotel design, placement, and maintenance, focusing on pest and disease mitigation. Attendees learned how to integrate native pollinators into conservation programs while following ecoBOB guidelines. Practical demonstrations covered proper materials, seasonal care, and monitoring techniques. The workshop emphasized collaboration between institutions to support biodiversity, ensuring managed bee populations thrive in zoo and aquarium environments.

8:30am-11:30am Starting (And Running) An Educational Podcast

Led by Charles Wallace, Arizona State University

Location: Palo Verde

Podcasts are a powerful tool for science communication, but it can be difficult to know where and how to start. Charles Wallace is the co-host and producer of independent science podcast Assigned Scientist at Bachelors (<https://asabpodcast.com>) and will guide you from idea to implementation. This workshop will cover technical aspects such as recording equipment and audio editing, as well as legal, logistical, financial, and creative aspects of creating and maintaining a podcast.

FIELDTRIPS - Meet at the Presidio Registration Desk

8:30am-10:30am Tucson Botanical Gardens

Led by Mike Madsen, Tucson Botanical Gardens

Enjoy Tucson's midtown oasis during monsoon season! A brief overview of the Gardens' history will be followed by a tour of the Gardens led by the Horticulture Manager. Topics during the tour will include an overview of the Gardens' integrated pest management program, bee box partnership, and soil formation. After the tour of the grounds, the Curator of the Tropical Conservatory will discuss the butterfly program, including a visit inside the greenhouse to see orchids and other tropical plants (butterflies are not present in the summer months). Following the tour, participants can then self-guide to areas of interest and consider visiting the café and gift shop.

No collecting - 12 Participants

ROUNDTABLES

8:30am-10:00am Beetle breeding, Flake Soil and Larva Care Roundtable

Facilitated by Julie LaTurner, Houston Zoo

Location: Presidio Ballroom

Houston Zoo would like to offer the 4th year of the beetle rearing round table an open discussion for all to ask questions about raising any/all stages, share successes, talk about substrates, brainstorm solutions and collaborate with other institutions. Share information on gear that has proven useful (flashlights, containers, tools of the trade).

Come with your questions, your successes, your try-agains, and let's work to increase our ability to breed Coleoptera of all kinds in-house.

10:15am-11:45am Butterfly Conservation Support Group: Documentary Screening & Roundtable

Led by Doug Taron, Erin Sullivan, Paige Howorth and Adrienne Brewster

Location: Presidio Ballroom

This roundtable session offers practical insight into the realities, challenges, and rewards of imperiled species recovery, beginning with a 45-minute screening of *Butterflies on the Brink*, a documentary that follows a multidisciplinary Ontario team over three years as they work to reintroduce the critically endangered Mottled Duskywing butterfly through field research, habitat restoration, and ex-situ rearing.

A facilitated, post-screening discussion will allow participants to ask questions and share experiences. Whether you are taking first steps or expanding existing conservation initiatives, this session will offer guidance on how to meaningfully contribute to species recovery.

11:45am – 12:50pm COMPLIMENTARY lunch provided for conference participants

Location: Presidio Ballroom

12:50pm-1:00pm Welcome and Announcements

Location: Presidio Ballroom

PAPER SESSION: Mutually Assured Instruction

1:00pm-2:20pm

Location: Presidio Ballroom

1:00pm-1:20pm Bugmobile: The First Four Years

Jeni Ruisch, Ohio State University

Partnering with Airstream, OSU's Entomology Department developed a mobile bug zoo and classroom. We custom-designed a 28-foot, 7,000-pound Airstream trailer to present our outreach animals to the public. This singular project has since traveled all over Ohio and beyond, teaching highly varied audiences about arthropods. Our focus is on bringing hands-on science to students in districts with limited resources. The stories of a design process with no precedent to follow, navigating the red tape of large institutional partnerships, public reception, interesting mechanics and ongoing maintenance of the trailer itself, and improving and evolving the programming, are all fascinating processes.

1:20pm-1:40pm The Effectiveness of Tactile Outreach Experiences for Non-charismatic Invertebrates

Jackie Billotte, Colorado State University/Butterfly Pavilion

Experience-based outreach can have a stronger impact on a person's attitudes and beliefs than one based on only providing facts. The Rosie Experience at the Butterfly Pavilion, in Brighton, Colorado, allowed guests of the zoo the opportunity to hold a live tarantula. Guests of the Rosie Experience exhibit were asked about their beliefs and views regarding spiders before and after holding Rosie. Using a hierarchical model of cognition, we assessed whether physical interaction, as in the Rosie exhibit, are effective at changing a person's attitude toward a species than ambassador animal exhibits that allow visitors to view the animal only.

1:40pm-2:00pm Bridging the gap: invertebrates as ambassadors in the addiction recovery community

Kelsey Stone, Butterfly Pavilion

This project explores the use of live invertebrates as ambassador animals to support engagement with nature and overall well-being in the addiction recovery community. Through guided encounters, participants learned about various aspects of invertebrate biology and behavior while drawing parallels between natural resilience and personal recovery stories. This study used surveys and qualitative feedback to assess impacts on participants' sense of connection, interest in nature, and how individuals perceive their ability to succeed in scientific disciplines. We aim to use these findings to demonstrate how invertebrate-based outreach can provide meaningful tools for recovery-oriented community programming.

2:00pm-2:20pm Research on Supporting Women in STEM Especially Entomology and Related Careers
Jacquie Genovesi, Edelman Fossil Park and Museum of Rowan University

Relative to U.S. population benchmarks, women remain markedly underrepresented in entomology and related invertebrate biology fields. Preliminary data from Women in Natural Sciences: A Longitudinal Comparative Case Study of Women in STEMM (1995-2015) DRL 2215207 will offer insights into how we can better support all individuals and increase the number of women in entomology and other STEM fields.

2:20pm-2:40pm Announcements & Break
Location: Presidio Ballroom

PAPER SESSION: I Can't Bee-Lieve It's Not Butterflies
2:40pm-4:00pm
Location: Presidio Ballroom

2:40pm-3:00pm The Tucson Bee Collaborative: Informal education for entomological research in a global biodiversity hotspot

Tanner Bland, Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum

The Tucson Bee Collaborative is an interdisciplinary research and education organization headquartered at the Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum (ASDM). Our mission is to investigate the solitary bee biodiversity of the Sonoran Desert via collaborations between students and ASDM docents. To date, we have documented over 450 species in the Tucson Basin and have generated a genetic reference library from over 1400 bee specimens, most of which is collected, analyzed, and published by students. We present a framework for developing insect monitoring networks that combine informal and formal education settings to foster curiosity and promote entomological research in a biodiversity hotspot.

3:00pm-3:20pm Exhibit Updates for Eastern Bumble Bees and Leafcutter Ants
Marissa Harrison, Thanksgiving Point's Butterfly Biosphere

Check out two exhibit updates at Thanksgiving Point's Butterfly Biosphere! Keepers and exhibit designers collaborated to create an enlarged exhibit for eastern bumble bees, *Bombus impatiens*, to improve their care and increase safety for the keeper team during husbandry. While guests love watching the leafcutter ants, *Atta cephalotes*, carry leaves to and fro, they rarely engage deeply with the myriad nest behaviors, like caring for brood and farming fungus. Multimedia and physical interactive elements were added to highlight those behaviors for guests. This presentation will review these exhibit updates and share data about their impact on the guest experience.

3:20pm-3:40pm Exploring Bumble Bee Exhibits, the Why and the How
Hallee Olsen, Missoula Butterfly House and Insectarium

Most people believe that honey bees and bumble bees are the same animal. We know this isn't true, so the Missoula Butterfly House and Insectarium sought engaging ways to educate the public about bees. We created and introduced a new live bumble bee exhibit, and the public response has been ecstatic! Not only are guests learning about the bumble bee life cycle, but we are all discovering that bee behavior varies from colony to colony. This talk will highlight the steps we took to create our immersive bumble bee exhibit, bumble bee husbandry, and lessons learned.

3:40pm-4:00pm From Enclosures to Insights: The HiveMind Platform
Nathan Brockman, Reiman Gardens, Iowa State University

HiveMind is a mobile-first platform designed to streamline invertebrate care and collection management across institutions. Using QR/barcode scanning, staff can quickly log husbandry activities, track populations, and monitor health in real time. Built as a multi-tenant system, HiveMind allows each facility to maintain its own data while contributing to a larger, shared dataset. This collective approach unlocks powerful insights—improving care practices, identifying trends, and supporting healthier, more sustainable populations. By adopting HiveMind, institutions not only enhance their daily operations but also contribute to a growing network advancing invertebrate education, conservation, and data-driven decision-making worldwide.

4:00pm-5:40pm TITAG Meeting

Come one, come all to the TITAG meeting to get updates on the sustainable populations SWARM program, Saving Animals From Extinction (SAFE) programs, invertebrate welfare and other fun TITAG business.

2026 TITAG meeting agenda 4-5:40pm

1. Steering Committee Introductions
2. Kassy Laven from the GT Butterfly House & Bug Zoo, Arthropod Representation in AZA Institutions within the United States
3. Steering Committee projects
 - a. RCP Goals and Overview
 - b. ESA review templates
 - c. TITAG Invertebrate Care Manual template
 - d. AZA vendor profile expectations to facilitate transfers
 - e. White papers for envenomation risk assessment/drills and group population management
 - f. AAGs for Millipedes and Scorpions
4. SAFE updates
 - a. Monarch
 - b. Prairie Butterfly
 - c. Burying Beetle
5. SWARM updates
6. Opportunities for participation and involvement

7:00pm – 9:00pm INSECT TRIVIA AND GAME NIGHT
Location: Presidio Ballroom

FIELD TRIPS - All Field trips meet at the Presidio registration desk

7:00pm-10:00pm Night Hike in Douglas Springs with Courtney and Emma Co-Led by Emma Califf, Bird Conservancy of the Rockies and Courtney Christie

You've seen the Sonoran Desert during the heat of summer, but have you seen it come to life at night? Join Wildlife Biologist Emma Califf and local naturalist Courtney Christie for a leisurely night hike and discover the new world that comes alive under the stars. Nestled in the foothills of the Rincon Mountains, just up the street from Saguaro National Park East, Douglas Springs contains a high diversity of flora and fauna. When the sun goes down and the temperature drops (a little), we have a chance to see a wide variety of native invertebrates, including but not limited to tarantulas, sun spiders, and scorpions, in addition to the extraordinary local herpetofauna, like Gila monsters, rattlesnakes, and toads.

Wear closed-toe shoes, bring plenty of water, and bring a headlamp or flashlight if you have one.

No collecting- 12 participants

7:10pm-10:10pm Night Hike Sabino Canyon

Led by Irene Dickinson, Arizona Monarch Collaborative/ Desert Botanical Garden

Sabino canyon is home to many unique invertebrates from tailless whipscorpions to aquatic beetles (if there is water in the creek). This hike is around 2 miles round trip if we don't get distracted by a cool bug first. Bring plenty of water and prepare to be amazed at the nocturnal wonders of Sabino Canyon.

The Sabino canyon trip may include up to 2 miles of hiking on mostly flat and paved paths.

No collecting –12 participants

7:15pm-11:15pm Blacklight in Peppersauce Canyon

Led by James Hall, Reid Park Zoo

Evening Blacklight event in Peppersauce Canyon. This canyon is home to many amazing species including the Arizona Unicorn Mantis, many species of moths and beetles, trapdoor spiders and potentially the Santa Catalina Mountain Tarantula *Aphonopelma catalina*. Backlighting for beetles and moths will be set up. Extra blacklights and flashlights will be available for searching for scorpions and other invertebrates.

Walking on uneven roads, trails, and washes, closed-toed shoes, long-pants and long-sleeved shirts are recommended for mosquitos. We will have a home base just up the road from the parking lot and then participants are able to walk roads and creek beds looking for wildlife.

No collecting- 12 participants

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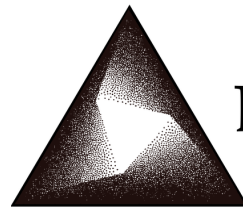
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Friday, August 21

8:00am - 4:00pm Silent Auction

8:00am - 4:00pm Registration -- Registration may close during paper sessions and lunch.

8:00am - 4:00pm Please visit our Vendors

MORNING FIELD TRIP - All Field Trips meet at the Presidio Registration Desk

7:00am-10:00am Behind the Scenes at the Arizona – Sonora Desert Museum

Led by Tom Weaver, Arizona - Sonora Desert Museum

Come see behind the scenes at the Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum with Curator of Herpetology, Ichthyology, and Invertebrate Zoology Tom Weaver. Get a look at our diverse collection of snakes, amphibians, invertebrates, and more.

Participants will travel on their own to the Desert Museum, a ~45-minute drive from the hotel, and can arrive any time after the Museum opens at 7:30 am. The behind-the-scenes tour will begin at the Reptile and Invertebrate Hall and last from 9:00am-10:00am, and participants can return to the hotel at their leisure afterwards.

No collecting- 12 participants

MORNING WORKSHOPS

8:30am-11:30am Women in STEM

Location: Agave Ballroom

Led by Jacquie Genovesi, Edelman Fossil Park and Museum of Rowan University

Bring science to life with a dynamic, hands-on Invertebrate Workshop designed for those working with middle and high school students. Participants will explore engaging, inquiry-driven lessons that use live specimens and interactive investigations to spark curiosity and deepen understanding of engineering design, simple forensic entomology, adaptation, and ecosystems. Aligned with NGSS standards, this workshop equips you with ready-to-use activities that support diverse learners through multiple entry points, culturally responsive strategies, and real-world connections. Walk away with a toolkit of memorable, classroom-tested experiences that get students thinking, questioning, and doing science.

8:30am-11:30am Designing Durable Enclosure Furniture with 2-part Epoxy Putty (Part 1)

Led by Marissa Harrison, Thanksgiving Point's Butterfly Biosphere

Location Joshua Tree

This workshop will explore how to design invertebrate exhibits that are customized to address the needs of the species, enhance the keeper's ability to service the enclosure efficiently and safely, and optimize visibility for guests. In addition to design discussions, this workshop will focus on how to make enclosure furniture using Free Form Habitat Black, a 2-part epoxy putty. Attendees will gain hands-on experience making a take-home rock shelter suitable for a small arachnid. Over the course of two days, participants will mix, apply, and texture stamp Habitat Black and practice simple painting techniques for a naturalistic look.

ROUNDTABLES

8:30am-10:00am Welfare

Facilitated by Karen Verderame, University of Pennsylvania School of Veterinary Medicine

Location: Presidio Ballroom

Round table discussing invertebrate welfare beyond our institutions. Many invertebrates and reptiles have become more popular in the pet trade. This round table will help facilitate discussion of ways that would be helpful in providing resources to other agencies, such as animal shelters/rescues, that are seeing more invertebrate and reptile species in their facilities, as well as identify other agencies that may need resources including schools, game commissions and US Fish and Wildlife. Other related topics to discuss included what species are identified at most risk of being "re-homed" and may need resources to help improve welfare.

10:15am – 11:45am Gear Chat

Led by Steven Barney, Beetle Source

Location: Presidio Ballroom

Roundtable for people to share information on gear that they have found useful (flashlights, containers, "tools of the trade"). This would not be for sales pitches, just people sharing their favorite hardware.

11:30am – 12:30pm COMPLIMENTARY lunch provided for conference participants in the Presidio Ballroom

12:30pm-1:20pm USDA Roundtable

Location: Presidio Ballroom

[Click here to submit questions for USDA staff in advance.](#)

1:20pm-1:30pm Welcome and Announcements

PAPER SESSION: You Want Flies with That?

1:30pm-2:50pm

Location: Presidio Ballroom

1:30pm-1:50pm Beetle Breeding at the Houston Zoo: Year of the Stag

Julie LaTurner, Houston Zoo

The Houston Zoo has been breeding a variety of beetles in flake soil, and this last year we had a lot of stag beetles and larva. Although we have given talks about our beetles, we felt we should talk more about our stag beetles, which species we are working on, what our successes have been, and how we set them up with higher chances of success.

1:50pm-2:10pm Feeding our Zoo thousands of insects at a time

Carolyn Curley, Omaha's Henry Doorly Zoo and Aquarium

Zoos depend on companies like BugCo, Josh's Frogs, and Dubia Roaches for insect feeders. These companies provide superworms, mealworms, waxworms, crickets, and more, and are generally reliable. The Omaha's Henry Doorly Zoo and Aquarium's Butterflies and Insects team have worked diligently for years to self-sustain a feeder insect program with the goal of providing for the entire zoo, so they do not have to rely on external companies. This paper outlines the process of how to start and maintain a program like this and how house grown feeders compare to company bought feeders.

2:10pm-2:30pm Encouraging Humane Care: An Arthropod Husbandry Database

Bob Fisher, Texas State University

This paper introduces a new project of the Insect Welfare Research Society: a searchable, open-access database documenting husbandry protocols for captive arthropods. The database gives each species a single protocol page with standardized sections (Housing, Nutrition, Temperature, Health Monitoring, etc.). Multiple groups can contribute their specific approaches within each section, each describing their setup, rationale, and outcomes. There is no editorial synthesis: submissions appear stacked within sections, allowing users to see the range of current practices, and people can comment to flag uncertainties, register disagreements, etc. This resource is meant to improve arthropod care by making best practices more visible.

2:30pm-2:50pm Managing Flystock

Mandy Pritchard, Cincinnati Zoo & Botanical Garden

The World of the Insect at the Cincinnati Zoo & Botanical Garden manages several species of feeder insects. Flesh flies (*Sarcophaga bullata*) and house flies (*Musca domestica*) have become a critical diet

item for many of our collection animals including mantises, burying beetles, aquatic insects, and spiders. This presentation will cover the supplies, husbandry methods, and common pitfalls of keeping these flies in constant culture at your facility. We will also discuss the impact these feeders have had on our collection animals that consume them.

2:50pm-3:10pm Announcements and Break

PAPER SESSION: I Just Mite

3:10pm-5:45pm

Location: Presidio Ballroom

3:10pm-3:30 Preventing Horizontal Transmission of Pest and Pathogens in Captive Beetle Populations

Michael Lin, San Diego Zoo

Coleoptera are the most diverse animals on Earth and with this diversity, have many pests and pathogens associated with them and their habitats. In managed care, we have the opportunity to control and potentially eliminate certain pests and pathogens present within our populations and their habitats and doing so is an integral step towards keeping a sustainable captive population of any species. The control and elimination of unwanted organisms such as mites, fungus gnats, nematodes, fungi, and slime molds aids in managing resources such as the materials the larvae rely on for sustenance as well as eliminating sources of opportunistic infections.

3:30pm-3:50pm A Giant Among Stick Insects

Winton Ray, Cincinnati Zoo & Botanical Garden

The Giant Walkingstick (*Phobaeticus serratipes*) is among the longest insects in the world and has been one of the World of the Insect's most spectacular species for more than forty years. This presentation will explore its natural history, husbandry, and display.

3:50pm-4:10pm Scorpion Enrichment at Thanksgiving Point's Butterfly Biosphere

Ashley Knight, Thanksgiving Point

Enrichment programs help keepers meet the behavioral and physical needs of captive animals by providing opportunities for species-appropriate behaviors and choices. Thanksgiving Point is introducing a formal enrichment program for our scorpions this year. It will ensure that all individuals receive regular enrichment opportunities and have a record of resulting behaviors. With a comprehensive record of individual temperaments and unique behaviors, keepers will be better equipped to understand and meet the needs of our scorpions as a taxon and as individuals. This presentation will discuss the program and showcase 4 scorpions responding to a variety of enrichment opportunities.

4:10pm-4:30pm Insights from Rearing the Phoretic Mites and Nematodes of Captive Invertebrates

Bennett Grappone, Santa Barbara Museum of Natural history

Phoronts and parasites are very poorly known compared to their hosts, but captive cultures of arthropods and other invertebrates offer a unique opportunity to observe their full life cycles. I will discuss the gaps in knowledge regarding these symbionts and some tips for rearing and collecting them, with a focus on the mites and nematodes of captive insects. Additionally, I will discuss my research into phoretic mites in the genus *Poecilochirus*, including the discovery and ongoing description of a new species reared from captive burying beetles in Alberta.

4:30pm – 5:45pm HUSBANDRY BREAKOUT SESSION

Location: Presidio Ballroom

The Husbandry Break Out session is organized to promote the discussion of husbandry in our industry, and to expand on the topics presented in the preceding paper session. All are welcome to join! --

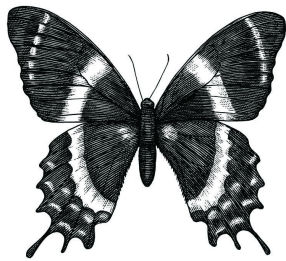
Facilitator Erin Sullivan - Woodland Park Zoo

EVENING EVENT

7:00pm - 9:00pm Black Lighting the Night Away

We will provide all the equipment for a black light sheet and mercury vapor light setup. Participants will be able to pursue moths, wasps, scorpions, tarantulas, etc!

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Saturday, August 22

8:00am - 4:00pm Silent Auction

8:00am - 4:00pm Registration -- Registration may close during paper sessions and lunch.

8:30am - 1:00pm Please visit our Vendors

ROUNDTABLES

7:30am-8:30am Husbandry Think Session

Location: Presidio Ballroom

Led by Erin Sullivan, Woodland Park Zoo

Do you have a husbandry project you are working on but want to talk it out with others? In this round table, we will discuss husbandry projects that people are currently tinkering with. Bring your ideas, experiences, and questions!

8:30am- 8:40am Welcome and Announcements

Location: Presidio Ballroom

PAPER SESSION: Project Snail Mary

8:40am-10:00am

Location: Presidio Ballroom

8:40am-9:00am IUCN's Red List and Green Status Assessment Process for American Burying Beetle (*Nicrophorus americanus*)

Bob Merz, Saint Louis Zoo

Late in 2025 the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) called a two day workshop to reassess the conservation status of the American burying beetle (*Nicrophorus americanus*), conducting both a Red List Assessment and a Green Status Assessment, one of the first times this has been done concurrently for the same species. Experts met virtually for two days to discuss the new statuses. It is not as straightforward as it may seem. This presentation will discuss the process and current outcomes regarding this species, as well as implications regarding educational interpretation of both Assessments - especially the newer, complimentary Green Status.

9:00am-9:20am Communicating Conservation and Collections Science: Assessing the Exhibit Landscape Joshua (Josh) Kulak, Academy of Natural Sciences, North Museum of Nature & Science

As repositories of life, biological collections-based institutions are uniquely positioned as advocates amidst the biodiversity crisis. To that end, the display of living and non-living organisms represents an essential educational platform. But are displays effectively communicating what they need to be? This presentation will summarize an upcoming publication which sought to assess the perspectives of zoo and museum professionals on this issue. With 113 respondents representing 76 institutions and 8 countries, this analysis provides valuable insights into areas of improvement for biological display, with particular bias towards terrestrial invertebrates thanks to the high participation of TITAG members.

9:20am-9:40am Cheers to 10 Slimy Years - Partula Snail Releases One Decade Later

Maria Buckner, Woodland Park Zoo

In September 2025, we celebrated 10 years since the first Partula snail releases in French Polynesia with the grand opening of a new concept snail reserve at the Te Fare Natura eco museum on the island of

Morea. In total, a record setting 7,000 snails were put back in the trees on 4 islands. We'll discuss this year's wins, share husbandry notes and advice for future travelers, and some insights on the use of Partula shells in Polynesian culture.

9:40am-10:00am THE CINCINNATI ZOO WANTS YOU! to join the American burying beetle recovery effort

Mandi Pritchard, Cincinnati Zoo & Botanical Garden

Recently the Cincinnati Zoo has become very successful at rearing too many endangered beetles. We are here to recruit anyone east of the Rocky Mountains to join us! Today you will learn about our EXCITING, personalized ABB packages, and pick a commitment that suits your needs! BE YOUR OWN BOSS. Entry level packages include breeding surplus beetles in January to bring their offspring to an established reintroduction site. Want more than a side hustle? DELUXE packages include multi-generational breeding, establishing a release site, pitfall trapping surveys, collection trips, and more! We have commitment levels available for all organizations! #BEETLEBOSS #NOTAPYRAMIDSchemeIPromise

10:00am-10:20am Announcements and Break

PAPER SESSION: Netflix and Krill

10:20am-11:30am

Location: Presidio Ballroom

10:20am-10:40am Using Insect Behavior in Media

Steven R Kutcher

Understanding insect behavior is important in keeping and manipulating insects. Besides scientific studies using Insect behavior as a tool is important in educational arthropod displays, the art of painting with insects (Bug Art), and in media like movie making. Knowing how insects react to external stimuli and problem solving are key elements. Behavioral information will also give insights to insects in a natural environment. Some examples: How to make an insect crawl into a slipper from four feet away. How to have an insect leave permanent footprints on paper, how to have a fly clean its self on cue, or how to make a cockroach run around in a circle on a flat piece of paper.

10:40am-11:00am Arthropoda in Cinema

Anthony Oliveira, St. Louis Zoo & Kristin Emanuel, Washington University

This talk introduces a comprehensive list of arthropods in cinema, comprised of over five hundred features and short films ranging from animated characters to embodiments of horror. By exploring arthropod representation throughout cinematic history, we assert the value of film in educational outreach, whether that outreach manifests through university-sponsored events or through local collaborations between zoos and independent theaters. Using film as a cultural touchstone, we demonstrate how it can foster greater understanding and empathy towards arthropods.

11:00am-11:10am Bugs of the Broad: A Survey of Invertebrates on the Grounds of the MSU Broad Art Museum

Amanda Lorenz, Michigan State University

The MSU Broad Museum is a contemporary art museum on Michigan State University's campus in East Lansing. In collaboration with artist Jan Tichy, who was studying the impacts of humans on natural

ecosystems for a 2026 exhibit, we sampled arthropods on the Museum grounds from April to September 2025. Though the grounds of the Museum represent a frequently disturbed habitat, our samples show a diverse array of tiny insects and other invertebrates such as mites, springtails, and tardigrades. This presentation will summarize both the findings on invertebrate diversity and how the specimens were ultimately featured in the exhibit.

11:10am-11:30am Tony's Creepy Crawly Zoo 2.0

Antonio Gustin, The Gateway Science Project

This paper examines the development and purpose of The Creepy Crawly Zoo 2.0, an immersive virtual reality platform created by entomologist Tony Gustin. Prompted by the COVID-19 pandemic's halt on live educational shows, Gustin engineered a proprietary 360-degree macro-VR camera to place users inside terrariums, making insects appear larger than life. The comprehensive digital facility houses this macro-VR Insectarium, a 3D-scanned preservation of the world-renowned Dan Capps insect collection, and an interactive outdoor garden area representing diverse ecosystems. Ultimately, the platform utilizes entomology as a "gateway science" to ignite critical thinking and global scientific literacy.

11:30am-12:30pm Lunch on your own

Afternoon WORKSHOPS

12:30pm-3:30pm Crawling Across the Table: Bugs and Board Games for Engaging Outreach

Led by - Stephanie Dole, BeetleLady

Location: Agave Ballroom

Tabletop gaming has exploded in popularity because of its innovative and social gameplay and interesting game themes. Game designers have tapped into the rich thematic world of the biological sciences and entomology in particular. This workshop will introduce participants to the variety of buggy games that can be used in outreach programs, for hosted events, and sold in your institution's gift shop. Games will be available to check out and play during the conference.

12:30pm -3:30pm Designing Durable Enclosure Furniture with 2-part Epoxy Putty (Part 2)

Led by Marissa Harrison, Thanksgiving Point's Butterfly Biosphere

Location: Joshua Tree

This workshop will explore how to design invertebrate exhibits that are customized to address the needs of the species, enhance the keeper's ability to service the enclosure efficiently and safely, and optimize visibility for guests. In addition to design discussions, this workshop will focus on how to make enclosure furniture using Free Form Habitat Black, a 2-part epoxy putty. Attendees will gain hands-on experience making a take-home rock shelter suitable for a small arachnid. Over the course of two days, participants will mix, apply, and texture stamp Habitat Black and practice simple painting techniques for a naturalistic look.

Please note this is a 2-part workshop. Part II is scheduled for Saturday, August 22 from 12:30pm -3:30pm. Ensure you keep the Saturday time free on your agenda.

12:30pm -3:30pm Misconception and Miscommunication: How to Create Inclusive and Equitable Environments Through the Lens of Arthropods in Education Programs and the Pet Trade

Led by Karen Verderame, University of Pennsylvania School of Veterinary Medicine

Location Palo Verde

Awareness of how we communicate—and how our messages are received and interpreted—is a foundational skill in building empathy towards animals, particularly towards arthropods, when addressing animal welfare and access to care. In examining the challenges and common misconceptions surrounding arthropods, participants will gain a deeper understanding of diverse perspectives and the importance of intentional, audience-centered science communication. The session will introduce core principles for fostering inclusive and equitable environments to build empathy and highlight best practices for meaningful community engagement.

Through a combination of guided discussion, small group work, and practical resources, participants will explore strategies to create more inclusive spaces and build empathy, while identifying key welfare concerns affecting arthropods in human care.

BANQUET

5:30pm – 10:00pm Final Silent Auction bids, Cash Bar and Banquet

Location: Presidio Ballroom

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FREE ADMISSION TO LOCAL ATTRACTIONS

The following organizations have generously agreed to offer free admission to IECC participants, just show your conference ID badge:

[Phoenix Zoo](#), [Reid Park Zoo](#), [Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum](#), [Tucson Botanical Garden](#), [Butterfly Wonderland](#)

CONDUCT

TITAG is dedicated to providing a safe, hospitable, and productive environment for everyone attending our events, regardless of ethnicity, religion, disability, physical appearance, gender, gender identity, or sexual orientation. It is important to remember that a community where people feel uncomfortable or threatened is neither healthy nor productive. Accordingly, TITAG prohibits intimidating, threatening, or harassing conduct during our conferences.

If you have any conduct questions or concerns throughout the conference contact Erin Sullivan in person or by email (erin.sullivan@zoo.org) or leave a message in the physical drop box at registration. The drop box will be checked daily. All reports will be taken seriously and handled with discretion and confidentiality to the extent practicable.

KEEPING COOL

Keeping Cool Getting too hot in the desert is no fun and is potentially dangerous. Here are some helpful hints for staying cool and enjoying your time in Southern Arizona

- Wear loose-fitting, lightweight and light-colored clothing.

- Drink plenty of fluids before, during, and after heat exposure.
- Wear a wide-brimmed hat.
- Wear sunscreen (30 spf or greater recommended).
- Drink lots of water throughout the day. Beverages with electrolytes may also be helpful.

If you experience any symptoms of heat exhaustion, stop any physical activity immediately, let someone know what is happening and find a place to cool down. Symptoms can include: headache, excessive thirst, nausea or vomiting, weakness, faintness, dizziness, confusion, or lethargy.

ABOUT COLLECTING

It is your personal responsibility to comply with state and federal regulations if you plan to collect while in Arizona. If you plan to collect in Mexico, contact USDA well in advance. Bringing live or dead specimens across international borders without proper permits is illegal. You should always carry your conference badge with you as proof that you are part of the conference, as well as your own personal Identification.

The conference is moving towards encouraging facilities to maintain sustainable collection in captivity to minimize the impact collecting has on the environment. If you choose to collect, please practice responsible collecting procedures and make proper arrangements to transport your live animals. Keep in mind that collecting is at the discretion of any trip leader based on prevailing conditions (if allowed at all). Please observe the following guidelines:

- When in the field, do not harass snakes or any other species. Remember that collecting vertebrates is strictly controlled and requires permits.
- Please practice respectful collecting etiquette. This includes but is not limited to returning rocks, logs, cow patties, etc. to the position in which you found them; treading lightly when not on established paths; asking permission to collect at other people's black light sheets and taking responsibility for keeping live animals cool when in the field.
- Some collecting sites (Madera Canyon, etc.) are more sensitive than others and may require additional communication with local stakeholders.
- Exploring the resort grounds is highly encouraged, native arthropods should be photographed and not collected.
- If you see people engaged in disrespectful or illegal collecting, please notify a leader or conference organizer, or address the behavior yourself. If someone needs information about a collecting practice, please provide it if possible or direct them to a trip leader.

PET POLICY

- Service animals are allowed at all conference related events.
 - Non-service animal pets such as dogs and cats are not allowed at any conference event.
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