

HISTORY OF SCIENCE

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The History of 4-H Entomology Club Work in Indiana

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Insect collecting clubs, 4-H or otherwise have existed in Indiana since 1924 at which time Professor J. J. Davis, Head of the Entomology Department at Purdue University organized the first such group. Membership was open to any boy or girl of school age and the principal club activities were the making of insect collections and the identification of insects. To promote interest, a collection contest and an identification contest was held annually at the University in conjunction with the 4-H Club Round-up. The first trophies were provided by George Mitten, an amateur entomologist of Goodland, Indiana, and by Harry Q. Holt, a vocational Agriculture teacher. Similar contests were attempted at the Indiana State Fair in 1928 but were discontinued.

In 1936, Glen Lehker was employed by the University to serve as an Extension Specialist in Entomology and the club program then under way became a part of his duties. Records show that in 1937 there were 7 insect collecting clubs in the state, 4 exhibits at the Club Round-up and 14 participants in the identification contest. That year the first 4-H Entomology project outline and record book was prepared. It included life history studies and control demonstrations which have remained an important part of the project. Work was likewise started on a manual showing how to collect and preserve insects. These materials were distributed in the spring of 1938 and through arrangement with the State Leader of Boys and Girls Club Work, Entomology became an official 4-H project. Robert W. Amick of the Club Staff was assigned the project and much of its subsequent success has been due to his efforts and enthusiasm.

A great deal of early promotion was necessary, most of which took the form of insect study in 4-H Club camps. Prior to 1940, the entomology specialist spent most of the summers attending such camps. Even today an important part of the program is insect study in established groups such as the 4-H Conservation Camp, the Conservation-Education Camp, and the Conservation Leaders Training Meeting. Growth was gradual until 1941 at which time there were 29 collections entered in the State Contest and 30 participants in the identification phase of the project. Just prior to our entry into World War II, the Indiana State Fair Board appropriated \$59.00 in premium money for insect collections and in 1942 the contest was moved from Lafayette to the State Fair in Indianapolis. During the war years, no effort was made to promote the entomology project. Instead, boys and girls were urged to enroll in gardening and other projects where their contribution to food supplies and the war effort would be more direct.

The program was not fully reactivated until 1948. By this time premium money for collections at the State Fair had reached \$332.00, of which \$200 was contributed annually by the Texas Gulf Sulphur Company, and a few years later by the Julius Hyman Company, which also provided a trophy for insect collections. Sponsorship of the identification trophy had meanwhile been taken over by the Thomas Say Entomological Society, a student organization at Purdue University.

This was also the year in which the Indiana Farm Bureau Co-op initiated a program of providing standard size glass top display cases to club members at less than cost. The following year spreading boards, pins and labels were added to the list of supplies, and the Fair Board constructed racks to display the cases of insects.

In 1949 the club manual on how to collect and identify insects was revised, with Dr. H. O. Deay as co-author, to include 20 additional pages of illustrations. The original project outline had also been revised several times in order to make it more practical and workable.

Also in 1949 the 4-H policy committee approved insect identifications as an official judging contest. Teams consisting of two individuals, were required to win in county and district eliminations before becoming eligible to participate in the State Contest. A paid trip to the 4-H Round-up was the major award. The contest was continued along these lines until 1955 at which time the finals were moved to Indianapolis with the Indiana State Fair Board providing a trip to Washington, D. C. and the United Nations to the high individual. Twenty-three teams took part in 1955.

The collection contest meanwhile, grew from 107 entries and 299 boxes in 1950 to 118 entries and 419 boxes in 1955. In 1954 entries were limited to one exhibit per division per county. The State Fair Board gradually assumed the obligation of providing the premium money which is now \$500 annually. In the spring of 1955 the Shell Chemical Corporation provided \$500 for the project, some of which was spent this year to purchase pen sets for winner and leaders in the various project phases.

4-H Entomology club work in Indiana and nationally was given impetus in 1952 with the beginning of a national awards program sponsored by the Hercules Powder Company. This program provides medals at the county level, a trip to the 4-H Club Congress at the state level and six \$300 college scholarships at the national level. Indiana has had such a scholarship winner each year which speaks well for the program in this state.