

Purdue University
Department of Entomology
Undergraduate Capstone
Project Summary

Name of Student:

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Name of Mentor:

Dr. Alan C. York

Project Title:

The Role of Entomology Outside the University: My Internship at the Smithsonian Institute

Project Summary:

For my capstone I decided to use my internship at the National Museum of Natural History in Washington DC. This opportunity was funded by Mr. Nel's Ackerson, and Purdue Agriculture. While most interns are placed into policy positions, mine was a more researched based placement. This meant that my experience was different than that of most students who go through this program. It was my goal to learn several things about the Smithsonian and the NMNH while I was in the capitol for the summer. I asked my supervisor and the head of the entomology department to give me information about the Smithsonian's goals and their strategies to achieve these goals. They supplied me with several publications that were internally distributed in the museums to give me the information I sought. I also used the Institutes webpage for information regarding its history and practices. I planned on explaining in my presentation how the Institute is governed and who the people are that make up the governing body.

One of my objectives was to visit all of the museums that make up the Smithsonian Institute in order to better understand the varied and diverse makeup of it. The fourteen museums that constitute the Institute vary from art galleries, to the National Zoo, to the Air Space museum. While separately impressive it was truly awe-inspiring to see learn about and see the cooperation between all the museums. By visiting the other locations I could also see just where entomology fit in to the Smithsonian and into its overall plan.

The project I was to work on, under the direction of Dr. Alma Solis, was to construct a database of the Lepidopteran superfamily Pyraloidea. This database is intended to be used as a support for farmers or import agents to recognize possibly dangerous insects. The database focuses not only on the moths themselves but on their hosts in order to add to the user usability of it.

I chose to use this internship as my capstone because of several reasons. This job required the use of many of the skills I learned here at Purdue and in the entomology department. This was also a chance for me to help produce something that may help the public. My foremost reason though was the fact that I got to experience something that not many people ever have to chance to, I worked inside the Smithsonian Institute. Being from small town Indiana this was an opportunity to go out into the world and see the way my chosen science is used in a real time, real world situation. By using my internship as a capstone I was also able to try and interest more entomology majors in applying for the Ackerson program.