

News release



23 July 2018

Primary school pupil's rare beetle find is snapped up by Museum of Natural History

A primary school pupil from Oxfordshire has discovered a rare beetle in her school grounds that has now become part of the collections at Oxford University Museum of Natural History. It is the first beetle of its kind to be added to the historically-important British insect collections since the 1950s.

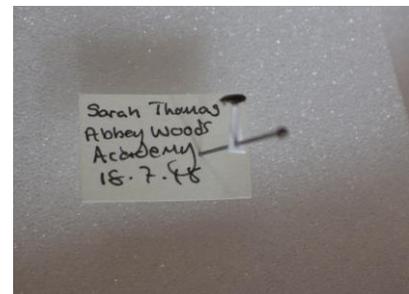
Ten-year-old Sarah Thomas of Abbey Woods Academy in Berinsfield found the beetle while taking part in the Museum's Project Insect initiative. The 5mm specimen was later placed under a microscope and identified as a False Darkling Beetle by Darren Mann, a professional entomologist and head of the Museum's Life Collections, who was visiting the school with the team.

"It's *Anisoxya fuscula*, which is rated as Nationally Scarce in Great Britain," says Darren Mann. "We seldom see these outside old forest habitats and this is the first beetle of its kind to be added to the collections for around 70 years."

The Heritage Lottery Fund-supported Project Insect programme is reaching out to pupils in state primary schools across Oxfordshire, using the Museum's British insect collection to spark curiosity and foster a love of natural history. Sarah Thomas found the False Darkling Beetle as part of a Project Insect visit, when her class met a professional entomologist, learnt about insect anatomy and how to identify and classify specimens, and went on the hunt for insects in the school grounds.



Ten-year-old Sarah Thomas from Abbey Woods Academy found the rare False Darkling Beetle in her school grounds as part of the Museum's Project Insect visit



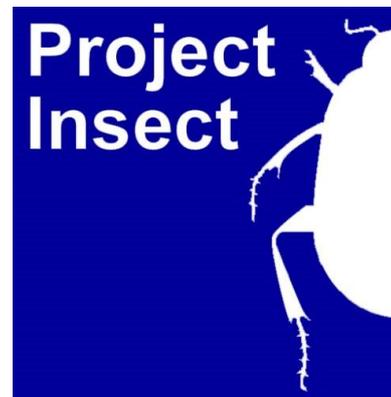
The specimen of *Anisoxya fuscula* is now pinned and in the Oxford University Museum of Natural History collections, complete with label

“Before Project Insect I didn’t really like insects, but now I really do,” said Sarah, after her find was added to the Museum collections.

Fran Long, part of the Project Insect team with Rodger Caseby, said: “Sarah’s find is fantastic and we’re delighted that Project Insect has already had this kind of impact. We hope that the pupils we’ve met will continue to collect insects and spread the word about how important they are – budding young entomologists are being created!”

During the summer holidays, Fran and Rodger are running a free Insect Summer School for children aged 10-14 and their families. The week runs from 13-17 August and participants will meet an entomologist, go behind the scenes at the Museum, photograph insects with an expert, and collect their own specimens. Those interested in booking a place should email education@oum.ox.ac.uk.

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For further information and images:

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Notes to editors

About HOPE for the Future and Project Insect

The Project Insect initiative is part of the larger Heritage Lottery Fund-supported **HOPE for the Future – Heritage, Outreach and Preservation of Entomology** project at Oxford University Museum of Natural History. Made possible by National Lottery players, the project aims to re-house and safeguard the nationally-significant British insect collections and restore an important Pre-Raphaelite-designed space, the Museum’s Westwood Room, to its original 1860 condition. HOPE for the Future will also support an extensive community

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outreach and public engagement programme centred on British animal wildlife, teaching skills and inspiring a lifelong interest in the natural environment and conservation.

About the Museum of Natural History

Founded in 1860 as the centre for scientific study at the University of Oxford, the Museum of Natural History now holds the University's internationally significant collections of entomological, geological and zoological specimens. Housed in a stunning Pre-Raphaelite-inspired example of neo-Gothic architecture, the Museum's growing collections underpin a broad programme of natural environment research, teaching and public engagement.

In 2015, the Museum was a **Finalist in the Art Fund Prize for Museum of the Year**. In 2016, it won the top accolade, Best of the Best, in the **Museums + Heritage Awards**.

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