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### **Archbold joins museums around the world for International Museum Day**

Last Friday, May 18, Archbold Biological Station was one of seven Highlands County museums and one of more than 37,000 museums across 156 countries that celebrated International Museum Day. Each year, the International Council of Museums chooses a theme for the celebratory day, one that lies “at the heart of the concerns of society.” This year the organization featured “Hyperconnected Museums: New Approaches, New Publics.” Hyperconnectivity refers to “the multiple means of communication we have today, such as face-to-face contact, email, instant messaging, telephone, or internet,” states the International Council of Museums. “This global network of connections becomes each day more complex, diverse, and integrated.”

Archbold offered a free public tour of its 270,000-specimen Natural History Collection, normally only open to scientific researchers, to celebrate the day. Researchers from the Entomology, Plant Ecology, and Avian Ecology Programs introduced visitors to the Collection, showcased some of the specimens, and demonstrated how they are digitizing the collection to make the data fully available for anyone in the world to access, one of the many ways Archbold truly is hyperconnected.

Six visitors from Highlands County took advantage of this special opportunity for a behind-the-scenes tour of the Collection. They met with Dr. Mark Deyrup, Research Biologist in the Entomology Program, who explains, “The founder of the Station, Richard Archbold, started

collecting species here many years ago. In the Entomology Collection, we are still working hard to identify and catalog all the bug specimens collected, because there are so many! A lot of identification is done under a microscope since many of these species are so small.” Making up 250,000 of the 270,000 specimens at Archbold, the Entomology specimens are the hub of the Natural History Collection at Archbold. “Archbold’s bug collection is one of the largest of any field station,” adds Archbold’s Executive Director, Dr. Hilary Swain. “It offers a remarkable overview of the species at Archbold and in the surrounding region.”

One person very familiar with the Entomology Collection at Archbold is Stephanie Leon, Assistant Collections Curator, who is working to digitize the data on the labels of each specimen so that the records can be publically available online. Tour visitors also had the chance to meet with and learn from her. Of particular interest to Leon is the insect-flower visitor database, which records observations of insect-flower interactions documented at the Station. “The flower-visitor database contains more than 10,000 specimens by itself,” she tells the visitors. “It is interesting to see the patterns that arise from a database like this. Some bee species visit many different flowers, but certain bee species may visit the same flower species over and over. This is important for pollination.”

Also on the tour was a stop at the Avian Ecology Program. “We prepare and maintain bird specimens in the Collection to be able to learn about how individual species’ physical characteristics may change over time, and how changes in the environment might influence these physical variations,” Cornell University graduate student Young Ha Suh explains to the visitors. “For example, it has been observed that the bills of birds collected from urbanized areas have become larger; one possible explanation for this is that backyard bird feeders have increased the number of seeds in the birds’ diets, and eating seeds is easier with a bigger and stronger beak. This is a great example of evolution happening on a small time-scale, and collection specimens are able to capture that.”

“Scientists travel here from around the world to utilize this Collection,” adds Executive Director Swain. “In the last decade, more than 100 research papers have been published based on work in the Archbold Collection. By digitizing the Collection, we are making it easier for scientists to quickly gather information, even when across the globe us.” As Archbold works to digitize its outstanding Natural History Collection, it becomes a part of an ever-growing community of hyperconnected museums. “Thanks to technology, museums can now reach way beyond their core scientific audience and find new publics when approaching their collections in a different way,” states the International Council of Museums.



**Photo 1: Angela Tringali (in blue), Post-Doctoral Research Fellow in the Avian Ecology Program, shows visitors bird skins kept in Archbold's Natural History Collection during the public tour held on International Museum Day. Photo by Katherine Charton.**



**Photo 2: Dr. Mark Deyrup, Research Biologist in the Entomology Program shows off a drawer of insects collected, identified, and digitized at Archbold. Photo credit: Archbold Biological Station.**