# NSECTS \& ithas 

## BACKYARD WORKBOOK

Flands-on Projects, Quizzes, and Activities for Kids

Jaret C. Daniels, PhD


# INSECTS \& BUGS 

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## Acknowledgments

I would like to thank my loving wife and best friend, Stephanie, for her unending patience, sense of humor, and support. She makes our life together truly wonderful. I also want to thank our many doting cats. They regularly keep me company during projects like this and quickly alert me should any of the assorted insects in our home escape. Lastly, I wish to thank my parents for encouraging my early interest in the natural world. It resulted in a continuously rewarding and always surprising career.

Edited by Brett Ortler


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## Insects \& Bugs Backyard Workbook: Hands-on Projects, Quizzes, and Activities for Kids

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## Safety Note

Learning about bugs and insects is a lot of fun, but whether you're in your back yard or at the beach, you always want to stay safe.

## Follow these guidelines:

- Never go out alone! Always bring an adult.
- If you're venturing far, bring a map, a smart phone, or a GPS so that you don't get lost.
- Always bring water to drink. It's dangerous to be out all day with no water!
- Bring a hat and wear long clothes to protect you from the sun. You may get hot, but at least you won't get burned!
- Wear insect repellent to protect you from mosquitoes, ticks, no-see-ums (biting midges), and chiggers.
- Never go into rivers, lakes, or oceans because the water may be deeper or faster than you realize.
- Never go onto private property. This means that someone else owns the land. If you see signs that say "no trespassing," turn around right away!
- Always carry a flashlight if going outside at night. - Avoid handling bugs. Many can bite, sting, pinch, or otherwise cause irritation. This is particularly true with bees, wasps, ants, centipedes, and scorpions. If you or someone in your family is allergic to stings and bites, don't closely approach insects and always be aware of your surroundings.
- Use caution when turning over logs, rocks, or other objects, or when reaching into cavities or crevices, and wear gloves if you plan to do so.
- Some bugs have irritating hairs or secretions. Always


## Table of Contents

Safety Note ..... 3
Amazing Insects ..... 6
What is an Insect? ..... 8
Insect Anatomy ..... 10
Activity: Label the Parts of this House Fly ..... 13
What's Not an Insect ..... 14
Activity: Insect or Not? ..... 17
Get to Know the Major Groups of Insects ..... 18
Activity: Bee, Wasp, or Ant Challenge ..... 25
Insect Life Cycle ..... 30
Actual Size ..... 34
Insects Month-by-Month ..... 36
Activity: Insects I Want to See ..... 40
Native and Non-native vs. Invasive ..... 42
Activity: Native or Non-native? ..... 44
Examine Habitats, Make a Hypothesis, Then Go Look ..... 46
Activity: Compare and Contrast ..... 48
Explore Various Habitats ..... 50
Habitat: Logs or Rocks ..... 52
Habitat: Flowers ..... 54
Habitat: Water ..... 56
Habitat: Dead Wood ..... 58
Habitat: Buildings ..... 60
Habitat: Plants ..... 64
Project: Backyard Blitz ..... 66
Insect Lookalikes ..... 68
Activity: Which Insects Can Sting? ..... 70
Fun Projects and Activities
Find a Dead Bug? Make It Part of Your Collection ..... 72
Build a Bug House for a Pet Bug ..... 74
Find and Raise a Caterpillar ..... 78
Hunt for Mosquito Larvae ..... 80
Moth Trapping ..... 82
Making Moth Bait ..... 84
Catch and Photograph Fireflies ..... 86
Cricket Math: Cricket Thermometers ..... 88
Cicada Cycle Math ..... 90
Make a Bee Bundle Nest ..... 92
Make Your Yard Bug-friendly ..... 94
Gardening For Bugs: Plant Native Plants ..... 96
Gardening for Bugs: Five Easy Plants to Help Welcome Bugs ..... 100
Community Science and Ways to Learn More ..... 102
Activity \& Quiz Answers ..... 105
Glossary ..... 106
Bug Bingo ..... 108
Sketch, Measure, and Describe What You Find ..... 110
Recommended Reading ..... 117
About the Author ..... 120



## Amazing Insects

Insects are amazing. They are easy to find in almost any outdoor space. They come in an incredible variety of different sizes, shapes, and colors, and they can be both creepy and attractive. In fact, about 1 million different insect species are known to exist, making them the most diverse group of animals on Earth. Insects are also super abundant. This means that if you tried to count all the insects on the planet, you would end up with a really, really, really big number.

## Fast Fact

At any one time, scientists estimate that there are some 10 quintillion (1,000,000,000,000,000,000) insects around-or about 200 million insects for every single person. That's a lot of insects!

## What is an Insect?

Now, if you want to find, observe, or study insects, it helps to know what an insect is. For starters, insects are often called bugs. When you use the word "bug" you probably are referring to a range of small, creepy-crawly critters such as spiders, centipedes, millipedes, and scorpions, as well as insects. All of those small organisms belong to a large group called arthropods. Arthropods have an external skeleton (called an exoskeleton), a segmented body, and jointed appendages such as legs and antennae. There are several different groups of arthropods: hexapods (insects and springtails), crustaceans, arachnids (spiders and ticks), and myriapods (millipedes and centipedes).

Insects are by far the most well-known and commonly seen arthropods. They are also the largest group of arthropods.



## Insect Anatomy

All insects share the same basic body plan, with three main body sections: the head, thorax, and abdomen, as well as six legs and two antennae. The head is the first body section. It has two compound eyes, two antennae, and mouthparts. The compound eyes are used for seeing. They are composed of hundreds of smaller individual eyes. Above the eyes are two segmented antennae. They are used for sensing touch, taste, or smell. Insect antennae come in many different shapes. The head also has mouthparts used primarily for feeding. They are most commonly used for chewing or sucking, and the type of mouthparts vary between insects. Some adult insects lack mouthparts altogether and don't eat. As adults, they survive on stored food and only live to reproduce.

## Diagram of Insect Anatomy



## Examples from the Insect World:



A Tiger Beetle's head with jaws


A Wheel Bug"s beak


A fly's sponging mouthparts

## Real-World Diagram of Insect Anatomy



1. Head
2. Thorax
3. Abdomen
4. Antennae
5. Compound Eye
6. Legs
7. Forewing
8. Hindwing

The thorax is the second body section. It has six legs attached, two on each of the three segments. The legs enable an insect to move. They may also be used for other tasks such as digging, jumping, and capturing or holding prey. The leg has several parts. These include the femur, tibia, tarsus, and a tarsal claw. Many adult insects may also have wings; some, like flies, have two wings, while others, such as beetles and bees, have four. Wings are used for flying.

## Examples from the Insect World:



An Eastern Lubber Grasshopper's thorax


Close-up of the legs and feet of a Western Honeybee


Close-up of a damselfly's wings

The final body section is the abdomen. It is also the longest and has the most segments. The abdomen has a series of small holes on the side, one pair on each segment, called spiracles. They are used for breathing. While also found on the thorax, they are most noticeable on the abdomen.

## Examples from the Insect World:



Spiracles on a Tomato Hornworm caterpillar


Close-up of a German Yellowjacket's stinger and abdomen


A Goldenrod Soldier Beetle's abdomen

## Activity: Label the Parts of this House Fly

Label the head, thorax, legs, abdomen, and compound eyes.
1.


## Quiz Time

1. How many wings does
a house fly have?
2. How many wings does a butterfly have?

## What's Not an Insect?

Many arthropods, such as spiders, millipedes, centipedes, and sowbugs and pillbugs, are often lumped together with insects, but they are different.

Here is a look at what's not an insect.
Spiders are familiar animals, and while they are almost all totally harmless, some people are afraid of them. In fact, they are great to have around, as they eat mosquitoes and other annoying bugs. Together with ticks and scorpions, spiders are arachnids. Spiders are easy to identify; they have a body that is divided into two sections (the cephalothorax and abdomen), eight jointed legs, and no antennae or wings. Their mouth also has a pair of jaws called chelicerae and two sensory organs called pedipalps, which function much like an insect's antennae.

Finally, all spiders produce silk, and some create large webs for catching prey. They can be found almost anywhere, from on the ground, in your house or garage, under logs or rocks, and, if you look close, even hiding in plants or on flowers.
Millipedes are shiny, often dark colored, worm-like creatures. They have a long, and somewhat hardened, tube-like body with many visible segments. Most segments have two pairs of small, jointed legs. While the name millipede means "thousand legs," millipedes only have up to a few hundred legs, and they crawl slowly across the ground. If disturbed, many millipedes curl up into a spiral.


Zebra Jumping Spider

Warning: While most spiders prefer to hide or run away from people, many spiders can bite, so don't handle them.


Black Yellow Garden Spider

Despite their strange appearance, millipedes are completely harmless. Most millipedes are scavengers and feed on dead leaves and decaying plants and wood. They are most often found in dark, damp locations such as under logs, rocks, mulch, or even in flowerpots.
Centipedes look similar to millipedes but have a noticeably flattened body. They have only one pair of jointed legs on each segment; these legs extend outward from the side of the body. Unlike millipedes, centipedes can move quickly, especially if disturbed, often scurrying in a snake-like motion.
They are ferocious predators and active primarily at night. During the day, they can be found in dark, damp places such as under logs, rock, mulch or leaves.
Earthworms have long, tube-like segmented bodies, but unlike insects or other arthropods, they don't have an exoskeleton or any jointed legs. They instead have a fluid-filled body cavity surrounded by muscle. A combination of fluid pressure and muscle action keeps the earthworm's body shape and enables it to move.

They require moist environments, and are commonly found in soil, under leaf litter, rocks or logs. Earthworms are very beneficial decomposers, feeding on decaying plant material, small microorganisms, fungi and animal waste. While they may be slimy, earthworms are completely harmless.


A Millipede and a Centipede

Warning: Don't touch or hold centipedes, as they can deliver a painful bite.


[^0]
## What's Not an Insect?

Sowbugs and Pillbugs are weird-looking organisms that resemble tiny armadillos. They aren't insects, or even arthropods at all. Instead they are small, gray, land-dwelling crustaceans called isopods that are related to shrimp and crayfish. They have hard, shell-like coverings made up of several plates, three body sections, seven pairs of legs, and two antennae.

While sowbugs and pillbugs are very similar looking, pillbugs can roll up into a ball when disturbed, which is why they are sometimes called "roly-polies." Both are active at night and feed on dead and decaying plant material. During the day, they can be found under leaf litter, logs, or rocks.

Snails and Slugs are slow-moving, slimy invertebrates called gastropods. They are commonly found in yards and gardens. Both have a fleshy, typically brown or gray unsegmented body without legs, and two pairs of retractable tentacles off the head. The upper two tentacles have eyes. Both snails and slugs secrete mucus or "slime" to help them move and prevent them from drying out. Snails, but not slugs, also have a hard shell for protection.


Sowbug


Pillbug


Snail


Slug

## Activity: Insect-or Not?

Circle the pictures below that show insects.



1. Spider

2. Butterfly

3. Scorpion
4. Carpenter Ant

5. Leafhopper

6. Beetle
7. Pillbug

8. Millipede

9. Grasshopper

# Get to Know the Major Groups of Insects 

There are more than 20 major groups (orders) of insects, but the most-common and familiar insects belong to a few major groups. By getting to know them, you can learn to identify many of the insects you'll see around.

| Insects |
| :--- | :--- | :--- | :--- |
| Coleoptera |
| Beetles |

## Activity \& Quiz Answers

Page 13, Activity: Label the Parts of the House Fly: 1. Head 2. Compound Eyes 3. Thorax 4. Legs 5. Abdomen

Page 13, Quiz Time: 1.22.4
Page 17, Activity: Insect-or Not?: Insects: 2, 5, 7, 8, 11, and 12
Page 25, Activity: Bee, Wasp, or Ant Challenge: 1. Wasp 2. Wasp 3. Bee 4. Wasp 5. Ant 6. Bee 7. Wasp 8. Bee 9. Ant

Page 32, Quiz Time: 1. C. House Fly 2. D. In water
Page 35, Quiz Time: 1. D. 11 inches
Page 44, Activity: Native or Non-native?: 1. Native 2. Non-native
3. Non-native 4. Non-native 5. Non-native 6. Non-native 7. Non-native
8. Native 9. Native 10. Non-native Bonus: $2,4,5,6,7,10$ are all Invasive Page 70, Activity: Which Insects Can Sting?: 1, 2, and 6 can sting
Page 71, Activity: Which Insects Taste Bad: 1, 2, and 3 taste bad

## Glossary

Abdomen: The last and usually the longest or largest section of an insect's body. It contains the reproductive, digestive, and excretory systems.
Arthropods: An invertebrate animal that has an external skeleton, a segmented body, and jointed appendages such as legs and antennae.
Complete Metamorphosis: The process by which insects that pass through four distinct stages when developing: egg, larva, pupa, and adult. (Butterflies are an example.)
Entomology: The scientific study of insects.
Exoskeleton: An insect's hard (or generally hard) outer body covering, which provides protection and support.
Head: The first of three main sections on an insect's body, consisting of eyes, mouthparts, and two segmented antennae.
Herbivores: Organisms that feed on plants.
Incomplete Metamorphosis: The process by which insects that pass through three distinct stages when developing: egg, nymph, and adult. (Grasshoppers are an example.)
Insects: The largest and most diverse group of arthropods. They can be separated from other arthropods by having a three-part body consisting of a head, thorax, and abdomen.
Osmeterium: A bad-smelling forked organ that swallowtail caterpillars can use to defend themselves.
Parasitoids: Organisms that live in or attach to the bodies of other organisms, primarily insects and arthropods, eventually killing them.
Predators: Organisms that capture and feed on other organisms.

## Glossary

Proboscis: The long, tongue-like mouthparts of an insect. These mouthparts are typically found in butterflies and moths and are used for sipping liquid food, such as flower nectar.

Spiracles: A series of small holes along the sides of an insect's body, which it uses to breathe.

Thorax: The second of three main sections of an insect's body. The thorax supports structures that enable the insect to move; these structures include three pairs of legs and one or two pairs of wings.

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## Bug Bingo

Test your bug knowledge with a game of Bingo!
Have an adult help you cut out the following four pages so that you and your friends can go on a Bingo hunt for beetles, butterflies, praying mantises, and more! Here's how it works:
Look for examples from the most-common and familiar orders of insects noted in each square. When you find one, cross out the square with an X or color it in. Keep searching for the things in the squares until you've made a row, column, or diagonal line of 5 connected squares.
Take note that the center square is a free space! Everyone gets that square.

| Soldier <br> Beetle <br> Order <br> Coleoptera | Tersa Sphinx <br> Moth <br> Order <br> Lepidoptera | Mourning Cloak Butterfly Order Lepidoptera | Water <br> Strider <br> Order <br> Hemiptera | Carpenter Ant Order Hymenoptera |
| :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |
| Eastern Tiger <br> Swallowtail Order <br> Lepidoptera | Fall Field <br> Cricket Order Orthoptera | Robber Fly Order Diptera | Giant <br> Water Bug Order Hemiptera | Ladybug Order Coleoptera |
| Cockroach Order Blattodea | Firefly <br> Order Coleoptera |  | Leafhopper <br> Order <br> Hemiptera | Bumblebee Order Hymenoptera |
| Paper Wasp Order <br> Hymenoptera | Earwig Order Dermaptera | Lubber Grasshopper Order Orthoptera | Pond Damselfly Order Odonata | Green <br> Lacewing Order <br> Neuroptera |
| Mayfly <br> Order <br> Ephemeroptera | Walking Stick Order Phasmida | Crane Fly <br> Order <br> Diptera | Cicada <br> Order <br> Hemiptera | Praying <br> Mantis Order Mantodea |

## Sketch, Measure, and Describe What You Find \#1

Scientists record their observations, as it makes their findings easier to study (and to share with other scientists). Use the blank page below to sketch some of the neat bugs you find. To help make them easier to draw, you may wish to temporarily capture them in a clear plastic jar. This way, you can closely observe an organism without it getting away.

Use the ruler on the bottom of this page to measure their size. Then, for each bug, describe them in more detail. Record their color, where you found them, the time of year, and any unique features. Scientists use information (data) like this to help study species and determine what they are. Once you have finished, use a field guide to see if you can determine what kind of insect you saw. You may even be able to identify the particular species!

## Description

Sketch
Size, date, location, temperature, order, etc.
$\qquad$
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| Pond Damselfly Order Odonata | Carpenter Ant Order Hymenoptera | Crane Fly Order Diptera | Mourning Cloak Butterfly Order Lepidoptera | Cicada <br> Order <br> Hemiptera |
| :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |
| Praying <br> Mantis Order Mantodea | Lubber Grasshopper Order Orthoptera | Eastern Tiger Swallowtail Order Lepidoptera | Mayfly <br> Order <br> Ephemeroptera | Paper Wasp Order <br> Hymenoptera |
| Green <br> Lacewing Order <br> Neuroptera | Firefly <br> Order <br> Coleoptera |  | Leafhopper Order Hemiptera | Bumblebee Order <br> Hymenoptera |
| Earwig <br> Order <br> Dermaptera | Cockroach Order <br> Blattodea | Tersa Sphinx <br> Moth <br> Order <br> Lepidoptera | Giant <br> Water Bug <br> Order <br> Hemiptera | Robber Fly Order Diptera |
| Soldier <br> Beetle <br> Order <br> Coleoptera | Walking <br> Stick <br> Order <br> Phasmida | Water <br> Strider <br> Order <br> Hemiptera | Fall Field <br> Cricket Order Orthoptera | Ladybug Order Coleoptera |

## $\stackrel{N}{\sim}$

## Sketch, Measure, and Describe What You Find \#2

Scientists record their observations, as it makes their findings easier to study (and to share with other scientists). Use the blank page below to sketch some of the neat bugs you find. To help make them easier to draw, you may wish to temporarily capture them in a clear plastic jar. This way, you can closely observe an organism without it getting away.

Use the ruler on the bottom of this page to measure their size. Then, for each bug, describe them in more detail. Record their color, where you found them, the time of year, and any unique features. Scientists use information (data) like this to help study species and determine what they are. Once you have finished, use a field guide to see if you can determine what kind of insect you saw. You may even be able to identify the particular species!

## Description

Size, date, location, temperature, order, etc.

## Sketch

| Earwig <br> Order <br> Dermaptera | Paper Wasp Order <br> Hymenoptera | Fall Field <br> Cricket Order Orthoptera | Mayfly Order Ephemeroptera | Robber Fly Order Diptera |
| :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: | :---: |
| Eastern Tiger <br> Swallowtail Order <br> Lepidoptera | Mourning Cloak Butterfly Order Lepidoptera | Lubber Grasshopper Order Orthoptera | Firefly <br> Order Coleoptera | Giant <br> Water Bug <br> Order <br> Hemiptera |
| Cockroach Order Blattodea | Soldier <br> Beetle <br> Order <br> Coleoptera | $S P A C E$ | Leafhopper Order Hemiptera | Carpenter Ant Order Hymenoptera |
| Tersa Sphinx <br> Moth <br> Order <br> Lepidoptera | Pond Damselfly Order Odonata | Bumblebee Order <br> Hymenoptera | Ladybug Order Coleoptera | Praying <br> Mantis <br> Order <br> Mantodea |
| Water <br> Strider <br> Order <br> Hemiptera | Walking <br> Stick <br> Order <br> Phasmida | Cicada <br> Order <br> Hemiptera | Crane Fly Order Diptera | Green <br> Lacewing Order <br> Neuroptera |

## Sketch, Measure, and Describe What You Find \#3

Scientists record their observations, as it makes their findings easier to study (and to share with other scientists). Use the blank page below to sketch some of the neat bugs you find. To help make them easier to draw, you may wish to temporarily capture them in a clear plastic jar. This way, you can closely observe an organism without it getting away.

Use the ruler on the bottom of this page to measure their size. Then, for each bug, describe them in more detail. Record their color, where you found them, the time of year, and any unique features. Scientists use information (data) like this to help study species and determine what they are. Once you have finished, use a field guide to see if you can determine what kind of insect you saw. You may even be able to identify the particular species!

## Description

Sketch
Size, date, location, temperature, order, etc.
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## $\stackrel{セ}{\square}$

## Sketch, Measure, and Describe What You Find \#4

Scientists record their observations, as it makes their findings easier to study (and to share with other scientists). Use the blank page below to sketch some of the neat bugs you find. To help make them easier to draw, you may wish to temporarily capture them in a clear plastic jar. This way, you can closely observe an organism without it getting away.

Use the ruler on the bottom of this page to measure their size. Then, for each bug, describe them in more detail. Record their color, where you found them, the time of year, and any unique features. Scientists use information (data) like this to help study species and determine what they are. Once you have finished, use a field guide to see if you can determine what kind of insect you saw. You may even be able to identify the particular species!

## Description

Size, date, location, temperature, order, etc.
$\qquad$
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$\qquad$

## Recommended Reading

Daniels, Jaret. Insects \& Bugs of North America:
Your Way to Easily Identify Insects \& Bugs (Adventure Quick Guides). Cambridge, Minnesota: Adventure Publications, 2019.

Daniels, Jaret. Backyard Bugs: An Identification Guide to Common Insects, Spiders, and More. Cambridge, Minnesota: Adventure Publications, 2017.

Daniels, Jaret. Butterflies of the Northeast: Identify Butterflies with Ease (Adventure Quick Guides). Cambridge, Minnesota: Adventure Publications, 2019.

Daniels, Jaret. Butterflies of the Northwest: Your Way to Easily Identify Butterflies (Adventure Quick Guides). Cambridge, Minnesota: Adventure Publications, 2020.
Daniels, Jaret. Butterflies of the Midwest: Identify
Butterflies with Ease (Adventure Quick Guides).
Cambridge, Minnesota: Adventure Publications, 2016.

## Websites

Seek by iNaturalist (www.inaturalist.org/pages/seek_app):
This application uses the camera on your smartphone or tablet, along with image recognition, to help you identify insects, plants, and other organisms.
BugGuide. (www.bugguide.net/node/view/15740): An online resource providing identification, images, and information on insects, spiders, and their relatives for the United States and Canada.

Butterflies and Moths of North America. (www.butterfliesandmoths.org): An online resource providing information, images, and occurrence data for butterflies and moths.

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Jennifer Bosvert: 25 (8); JGade: 17 (leafhopper); Jim and Lynne Weber: 45 (1); John Bradford: 61 (moth caterpillars); Josef Stemeseder: 71 (4); ju_see: 9; Julian Popov: 98 (bottom right); K E Magoon: 97 (top left); kallen1979: 70 (1); Kelly Marken: 23 (halteres on crane fly); Kendall Wiggins: 55 (praying mantis); Kent Sievers: 43 (top right); Kevin Collison: 18 (lepidoptera), 20 (giant swallowtail butterfly); Kira Immordino: 97 (bottom left); Kras_Stock: 22 (ant); Kwanbenz: 100 (bottom right); kzww: 17 (earthworm); Laura Dinraths: 16 (slug); Leena Robinson: 31 (pupa), 100 (bottom left); LegART: 59 (bark beetle); Maarten Zeehandelaar: 95; Maciej Olszewski: 25 (7); Macronatura.es: 60 (silverfish); MakroBetz: 7; Malachi Jacobs: 34 (red-legged grasshopper); Maple Ferryman: 24 (fork-tailed bush katydid); Marek Mierzejewski: 20 (mourning cloak butterfly); Marek Mnich: 35 (green lacewing); Martina Simonazzi: 57 (backswimmers); Mary Terriberry: 91; Matee Nuserm: 17 (grasshopper); Matt Benoit: 45 (9); Matt Jeppson: 20 (cecropia moth), 36 and 39 (luna moth); Maxim Novikov: 59 (spiders); McGraw: 98 (middle right); Media Marketing: 51; Melinda Fawver: 17 (carpenter ant), 20 (tersa sphinx moth); 62 (antilion); melissamn: 67; Michael Siluk: 16 (sowbug); Michael Siluk: 21 (tule bluet damselfly); Michal Ziemski: 59 (earwig); Micheal Benard: 23 (robber fly); NadyGinzburg: 73 (bottom); Napat: 81; Napat_M: 60 (house flies); Natalia Kuzmina: 56; Nataliia Yankovets: 49; natmac stock: 21 (meadowhawk dragonfly); Naxim Nikiforov: 11 (top right); newsony: 61 (ant nest); Nina B: 97 (bottom right); Nopparat: 100 (top middle); NOTE OMG: 42 (left); Ondrej Prosicky: 8 (hexapods); Paul Brennan: 98 (top right); Paul Reeves Photography: 12 (bottom right), 18 (hymenoptera and coleoptera), 19 (six-spotted tiger beetle); 21 (damselfly perching and sedge sprite damselfly), 22 (yellowjacket), 24 (fall field cricket), 25 ( 1,2 , and 3), 37 (banded woolybear), 39 (banded woolybear), 42 (right), 54 (top); 55 (day-flying moths and wasps), 59 (carpenter bee and wood wasp), 69 (all), 70 (6 and 8), 89; Paul Sparks: 43 (bottom right), 45 (3), 70 (4); Pavel Krasensky: 17 (wasp); photographyfirm: 15 (bottom); prasom boonpong: 17 (centipede); Protasov AN: 6, 43 (middle left); Puttachat Kumkrong: 8 (myriapods); Rabbitti: 30 (adult); Randy R: 35 (milkweed bug); RattiyaThongdumhyu: 79 (left); RomBo 64:37 and 39 (bumblebee), 100 (top right); Ron Maxwell: 32 (adult); Ron Rowan Photography: 8 (arachnids); Rose Ludwig: 21 (dragonfly perching); Russell Marshall: 25 (5); Sacha Ye Gauthier: 70 (5); samray: 55 (robber fly); Sari ONeal: 34 (white-lined sphinx moth), 71 (3); Serguei Koultchitskii: 34 (giant swallowtail); Silent Shoot: 27 (milkweed assassin bug); Steve Bower: 18 (mantodea), 29; StudioNewmarket: 35, 36 and 38 (june bug); SunflowerMomma: 102; Susan Schmitz: 17 (scorpion); Suzanne Tucker: 37 and 38 (firefly), 86; tea maeklong: 26 (termites); TechnoSavage: 54 (bottom); The Downeast Artisan: 97 (middle left); TheLazyPineapple: 65 (grasshoppers); T-I: 64; Tom Franks: 14 (bottom); tome213: 53 (spider); tviolet: 97 (top right); Viktoriya A: 98 (top left); Vinicius R. Souza: 34 (lady beetle); Vitalii Hulai: 32 (bottom); Vitolga: 57 (whirligig beetles); watchara panyajun: 35 (cockroach); Wirestock Creators: 25 (6); wjarek: 96 (right); wnarong: 25 (9); and yanikap: 12 (top right).

## About the Author

Jaret C. Daniels, Ph.D., is a professional nature photographer, author, native plant enthusiast, and entomologist at the University of Florida, specializing in insect ecology and conservation.
He has authored numerous scientific papers, popular articles, and books on gardening, wildlife conservation, insects, and butterflies, including butterfly field guides for Florida, Georgia, the Carolinas, Ohio, and Michigan.
 He is also coauthor of Insects \& Bugs for Kids: An Introduction to Entomology and Wildflowers of the Southeast Field Guide.
Jaret currently lives in Gainesville, Florida, with his wife, Stephanie.


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