Delaware Museum of Natural History

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Massive insects invade Delaware Museum of Natural History

WILMINGTON – Giant robotic bugs descend on the Delaware Museum of Natural History at *Backyard Monsters: The World of Insects* open January 31 – May 3, 2009. The exhibit's massive carpenter ants, emperor scorpion, and praying mantis span up to 96 times their normal size and show visitors life from a bug's perspective.

The huge, moving creatures in the exhibit measure 6 to 8 feet in length and inhabit natural settings with looming blades of grass. Each component contains a system of animated robotics, or "animatronics," that enables it to exhibit lifelike movements such as curling tails, snapping claws, and moving legs. Two static dragonflies with 10-foot gossamer wingspans soar nearby.

"Each robotic insect has been recreated from a living specimen so that lifelike colors and movements could be captured," said Gene Bullard, the creator of *Backyard Monsters*.

To ensure that the giant bugs were scientifically accurate to the smallest detail, Arthur Evans, Ph.D., resident entomologist of the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County, consulted on insect anatomy and behavior. The result is an exhibit so realistic and true to life that it was endorsed by the Entomological Society of America.

Interactive learning displays and a large collection of real specimens enhance the exhibit. The "Bug's Eye View" display allows visitors to view their friends and family in multiple through an insect's compound eye. "The Better to Eat You With" shows how insects chew plants, sip nectar, and suck blood. Kids can control six-legged robotic creatures at "Robo-Bugs" and put together 3-D puzzles at "Assemble an Ant."

The "First Flyers" station invites visitors to manually activate a mechanical apparatus that demonstrates two different methods of flight in the bug world. "It's a Flea's Life" depicts how fleas live on a dog's body and why they are suited to their environment. "Better to Eat You With" shows the different methods that grasshoppers, butterflies, and mosquitoes use to intake food. Children can transfer raised images of bugs onto paper using crayons as souvenirs to take home.

Backyard Monsters: The World of Insects at the Delaware Museum of Natural History is sponsored by DuPont.

About the Delaware Museum of Natural History
As the only natural history museum in Delaware, DMNH opened its doors in 1972 to excite and inform people about the natural world through exploration and discovery. The museum is located five miles north of Wilmington, and three miles from the Pennsylvania state line, at 4840 Kennett Pike (Route 52).

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IMAGES AVAILABLE

Photo: PrayingMantis.jpg
Photo caption: Giant robotic bugs like this praying mantis invade the Delaware Museum of Natural History at its new special exhibit *Backyard Monsters: The World of Insects*, open Jan. 31 through May 3, 2009.

Photo: RoboBugs.jpg
Photo caption: Kids can control robotic bugs at the Delaware Museum of Natural History's new special exhibit *Backyard Monsters: The World of Insects*, open Jan. 31 through May 3, 2009.

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