

SOP 14: Outreach, tours, and more

Frost Entomological Museum Curator & Interest Group

9 July 2018

Preamble

This SOP describes guidelines, rules, and recommendations regarding outreach events, tours of the Museum, and related activities.

1 Outreach at the Museum

All outreach-at-the-museum requests should be handled through the Entomology Graduate Student Association outreach officer—<http://ento.psu.edu/graduateprograms/egsa/officers>. May through August is when we seem to get the most requests, which also corresponds to our field season and grant deadlines. Keep these responsibilities in mind when deciding whether to commit to an event. Note that we are *not* obligated to say yes to these requests, but they are usually incredibly rewarding! Other guidelines include:

- Honor requests only if they are made in a timely manner, ideally if the request is made at least a month in advance of the event. This enables ample time for planning, and it also weeds out events that do not have a well-defined goal for learning
- Maintain communication and solicit updates from the requester as the date approaches. We have made extraordinary preparations in anticipation of receiving 30 people at the Museum, only to have seven show up (Most of the group decided to do something else that day). In this instance it was an enormous amount of set-up time and emotional energy spent on a group that was too small to be worth that time and energy
- Consider indulging the request only if the participants are at least seven years old. Experience has taught us that people younger than seven usually do not have the attention span to appreciate a broad range of museum work, or they get fixated on irrelevant (how the compactor works) or small scale (the one tiny beetle they could have seen in their house) objects. Also, our workbench and other infrastructure generally cannot accommodate people of their stature
- Any tour of the museum *must* begin with a discussion of the rules, with every attendee listening. No one enters the collection room until s/he understands the rules. For example, we do not allow food and drink in the collection room, nor do we allow people to wander freely, open storage units, sit on storage units, etc. It is a sacred space that must be respected and protected

- Another important rule, separated here for emphasis, is that we do *not* take requests to see extra specimens during the event. Whatever is arranged to be exhibited ahead of time is what the visitors get to observe. We cannot take time to dig out additional specimens—Can I see the oldest specimen? What’s your rarest specimen?— during the event, as this puts the collection at risk, distracts Museum staff, and often snowballs into endless requests
- On a related note, the research collection is generally off limits for these kinds of events. Please try to exhibit specimens from the outreach and teaching specimens. Requests that can only be satisfied by exhibiting specimens from the research collection *must* be approved by the Director and/or Collection Manager.
- We *strongly* discourage exhibiting live insects in the collection room, as these create a threat to the dried insect collection
- Make sure the collection room and Museum are secure when the event is done

2 Outreach away from the Museum

As above, all other outreach requests should be handled through the Entomology Graduate Student Association outreach officer—<http://ento.psu.edu/graduateprograms/egsa/officers>. Read the recommendations above and consider that they are similar for remote outreach events:

- Non-museum staff must sign a materials loan form (*Frost SOP 06*) and have it approved by the Director or Collection Manager before borrowing outreach materials
- Maintain communication and solicit updates from the requester as the date approaches.
- Consider indulging the request only if the participants are at least seven years old
- Begin the event with a discussion of the rules: we don’t open outreach displays, we treat live insects with respect, *etc.* This is admittedly difficult at a fair-like event
- Exhibits *must* be kept safe from detrimental environmental factors, especially UV radiation and water
- Exhibits containing dried specimens *must* be freeze-treated upon arrival back at the Museum

3 Recording the event

Every event, no matter how small, must be recorded for posterity using the Web-based form available at: <https://sites.psu.edu/frost/policies/>. Required data include the date, the number of people impacted, a brief description of the event, and any lessons learned or other notes to be made about the event.