

Miles Maxcer: Land Resources & Environmental Sciences

Mentor: Robert Peterson, Michael Gates -- Land Resources & Environmental Sciences, Smithsonian Institution
Entomology Collections Curation of Hymenoptera at Smithsonian Museum of Natural History

With the over 35 million specimens housed at the Smithsonian Department of Entomology's National Insect Collection, there comes an extensive challenge in keeping the collection organized, updated, and recorded in online databases. Additionally, the Smithsonian is tasked with engaging the public. This project will include the learning and application of taxonomical and curatorial techniques, in addition to the production of entomological film media for the Smithsonian Institution and its partner, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Agricultural Research Service. Because the Smithsonian is a major repository for insect specimens from important research worldwide, preparation for the project was necessary to ensure that the requisite knowledge and techniques would be used to preserve the integrity of the collection and make the work efficient and accurate. The presentation will include information and media relating to the internship experience at the Smithsonian Department of Entomology. My specific focus will be on the curation of parasitic Hymenoptera in the superfamily of Chalcidoidea wasps. The poster presentation will cover the concepts learned, including critical skills in museum curation (handling fragile museum-quality specimens, labeling, databasing, and sorting specimens), systematics, taxonomy, basic research, and media creation.