

# It's a family tradition!

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To get a broad idea of what is involved, here are recent rules for submission of a properly preserved, pinned, identified and curated insect collection.

## Rules for both Junior and Senior collections:

- A collection must consist of insects only and not other non-insect arthropods such as spiders, centipedes, scorpions, isopods, etc. It should also not contain other invertebrates such as worms and slugs.

- Insects must be properly pinned using insect pins (not sewing pins or needles) or preserved in alcohol (some soft bodied insects), and labeled.

- Insect specimens must be mature adults. No caterpillars, larvae, grubs, or immature insects considered.

Rules for Junior 4-H'ers: Collections must contain a minimum of 15 different adult insects from a minimum of 5 different orders of insects.

Rules for Senior 4-H'ers: Must contain a minimum of 25 different adult insects from

a minimum of 9 orders.

Just an example — there are 28 orders of bees alone, and, according to Brad, it's preferable to find them in order.

Brad built his own collection boxes and did a meticulous job sorting, identifying and mounting his collection.

Sheila saved a lot of memorabilia from Brad's 4-H years, including scoring sheets from his projects at the State Fair.

On one the judge wrote: "You really have done a remarkable exhibit ... As near perfect as I have seen."

Another year the judge wrote: "Superb collection — probably the best at State Fair."

In addition to blue ribbons, Brad earned gold Special Merit ribbons for his exceptional collections.

Sheila's grandson, Henry Vollmer, is an eighth grader and a third generation entomologist.

Similar to his uncle Brad and great-uncle Glenn, he has taken to bug collecting like, well, like flies to honey.

One night, when Henry was a two-year-old still tucked in his crib, he started sobbing

and saying "Saw big boosee, boosee."

Translation "I saw a big bug."

"I thought he was dreaming," Sheila recalls. But no, then she saw it: a giant Hercules Beetle.

Like many before it that beetle ended up in Henry's Great-grandma Mary's freezer where it remained until Henry was old enough for Mini 4-H in the second grade. That year he followed the family tradition and started his career as an entomologist.

This is his fifth year in 4-H and unlike the kids who are gluing a diorama together on the way to the fair, Henry has been meticulously working on his collections.

He was pinning some recently and chatting while he worked.

Henry explained the bugs in a 4-H exhibit must be native to the United States, not just to Indiana.

Sheila noted the whole family has taken a black light and sheet outdoors at night during Florida vacations to search for certain species.

They found a giant, three inch grasshopper in a Louisiana swamp and bugs foreign

to Indiana while in Colorado.

"Mainly you try to find the biggest or the coolest," Henry notes.

Despite his young age, Henry can name (and has found) the largest moth in the United States — a Cecropia moth (*Hyalophora cecropia*), which belongs to the giant silk moth family (*Saturniidae*), and features an impressive wingspan of 5 to 7 inches.

His is mounted in the bottom center of one of his display boxes. In his fifth year he must display 50, adding after 10 per year, but that doesn't mean just 50 bugs; it's 50 families under their common name.

With the precision of a skilled surgeon, Henry carefully mounted the bugs he was working with, delicately spreading the wings and using the pins to gently manipulate the placement and anchor the display in place.

Henry has become so adept at pinning he has done demonstrations on the art for other 4-H'ers, and he's always happy to share his knowledge.

Be sure to check out his collection at the 2026 Dubois County 4-H Fair.



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