

Reviving entomology at the Whanganui Regional Museum

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Whanganui's museum opened in 1895 to display a private collection of Māoritanga and natural history specimens; at the time it was the fifth-largest museum in New Zealand. Until about the 1950s it was actively science-focussed, recovering the Mokoia meteorite in 1908 and excavating thousands of moa bones at Makirikiri in the 1930s. Since then the natural history collection has stagnated, with all subsequent curators concentrating on expanding the social history collections or archives. My position as Curator of Natural History was created in 2013, and much of my work has been sorting and identifying the bird, mammal, reptile, and snail collections. Entomology is represented by several donated private collections, some with data. I've been in the enviable position of developing an entomology collection policy to support the Museum's role in representing Whanganui regional biodiversity, and have embarked on a collection programme with the help of volunteers. The first project is pitfall trap sampling of several forest remnants in the Whanganui area, focussing on carabids in particular, to create species lists that might inform conservation priorities.

