

Watching insects: my enjoyable hobby

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Hello!! My name is Varsha V. I'm 15 years old studying in class X, I live in a city called Coimbatore (South India) and I'm an insect watcher. I've been watching insects for the past couple of months and this has become my new hobby. It all started with the book- "Watching Insects by Dr. Abraham Verghese" gifted to me by my friend.

That book sat on my shelf for 2 years because I didn't think that insects could be interesting. I usually found them boring and annoying, especially the house flies and the mosquitoes.

But one day, we were cutting down creepers from my balcony and I saw a couple of big red ants scurrying about on my gate. I'd never really given much thought to ants before, probably because I get bitten a lot, but that day I was fascinated watching them move in line, the same day they were cleaning our garden and I watched a lot of ants coming out from a damp wood piece. Its abdomen was nearly transparent; I think they are red carpenter ants. After watching those ants and a few other bugs and insects for the next consecutive days, I became so fascinated that I started reading the book.

The book helped me understand insects on a more scientific level as I learned about their body parts, their scientific names etc. I slowly started observing the diversity of the insects and how beautiful they could be. I loved watching spiders too, even though they are not insects.

I collected a spider egg sac from my curtains. I took them because they were going to be killed when the curtains were washed. So I then hung them on a lid of a box and closed it shut. The spiderlings hatched and seven of them had come out while the others were still in the sac. I also noticed a spider web outside my house hosting about 50-60 tiny spiderlings or, probably more than that.

I usually go out to look for dead insects so that I could start an insect collection. I now have a tiny collection of insects mostly made up of small moths. I love watching moths when they sit on my glass window at night, they are attracted to the light from the bulb. Seeing my interest in insects my mother called out to me one afternoon to show me a butterfly. It was hovering over my mother's precious curry leaf plant and after a couple of minutes, it flew away. I was naturally curious and checked out the plant. It had a yellow egg under the leaf and after research, I found out that it was the

common Mormon butterfly's egg. Right now my plant hosts two tiny caterpillars and an egg. Honestly, this hobby isn't as tough or boring as it seems. On the other hand it's extremely easy and very fascinating. I made a terrarium for hosting insects temporarily so that I can watch and observe them. You can easily make an insectarium, just find a box (a glass box would be better for easy observation), put mud and rocks at the bottom. Add in some twigs or a branch and keep some plants. I mostly prefer

snake plants as they can survive even in harsh climates and they don't need a lot of water and maintenance. Currently, it's hosting a brown grasshopper whom I named Mr.Hoppey. He is my temporary pet. And I may release him back to my garden soon.

Watching insects ultimately brings you closer to nature and is definitely an enjoyable hobby.



With my insectarium

(Congratulations Varsha- keep going; may insects charm you all your life -Editors)