

that makes the insects appear to move.

- **Stages of Death:** Mortuary drawers reveal models of cadavers in two stages of decay. During the first stage, the body becomes bloated by gas trapped inside. The activity of maggots and other insects raises the temperature of the body (as high as 53 °C, or 137 °F) and the gases expand until the pressure causes the skin to burst. The body then enters the decay stage, and becomes a host to many other dermestid insects.
- **Environmental Conditions:** One of the biggest challenges for a forensic scientist is determining the effects of the environment (both internal and external) on the case at hand. Entomologists use various tools to determine conditions that the body has been subject to, in particular air temperature and humidity. An interactive computer simulation allows kids to alter the external conditions and see the resulting insect population. Insects also provide clues as to the internal conditions of the body, especially levels of chemicals in a person's system. For example, maggots develop more rapidly on tissue containing cocaine, so a level of rapid decomposition could be a clue to the presence of the drug.
- **Methodology & Research:** The exhibit also shows the methods that forensic entomologists use to collect, interpret, and present evidence. Kids can view collection jars and look through a microscope at insect evidence; wipe-off marker boards show the breakdown of a case; and in the mock courtroom, a video explains the use of entomological evidence in legal cases.

CSI: Crime Scene Insects demonstrates the important role that insects — and the forensic entomologists who study them — play in assembling the many pieces of a case. Kids work their way through the methods and science of solving cases, and the exhibit serves as an excellent demonstration of the scientific method in action.

CSI: Crime Scene Insects is on view through September 10, at the New York Hall of Science in Flushing Meadow-Corona Park, Queens. A note to parents of small children: The exhibit features some graphic crime scene photos, so please be advised.

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