

Goin' on a Bug Hunt

It's May, the perfect time to go bug hunting! Most of God's littlest critters have hatched or crawled out of their winter bedrooms. So why not arrange a few meetings between you and them? Bug

watching can be fun if you know how. It can be even more fun if you know what to look for. So read these pages to learn more about bugs. Then go out and observe these fascinating critters.

Catch and Release

Here are three easy ways to find these little critters.

1. Shake a bush. Lots of bugs and spiders hide in bushes when they see you coming. To capture them (carefully!), first spread the pillowcase flat on the ground under the bush. Then gently shake the branches that are above the pillowcase. You'll probably see several bugs fall onto the pillowcase. Some of them will try to run away. Those are the bugs you want. Clamp a plastic container onto the ground over a bug. Then work the lid gently under it. Keep the lid on the container and turn the container over. Now you can look carefully.

2. Look under rocks and logs. This is where you can find pill bugs, beetles, roaches, and some worms. Have your container ready before you roll anything over. These little critters react to light and run away quickly. Handle worms carefully. They need their slimy covering.

3. Sit still and look for motion. Little critters out in the open "freeze" when they see you coming. If you sit very still for a while, they'll begin to move again.

If you want to study a bug more carefully, make sure the lid of your container is on tight. Then put that container into your backpack to take inside with you. When you go inside, put the tightly closed container into your fridge for a while. The bug won't die, but it will move more slowly.

When you're finished observing the bug, always return it to the same place you caught it. Some bugs can eat only one kind of leaf or live in only one exact type of place. Always release these creatures. God made each of them for a special purpose.

I think you might be sitting a little too still...



A Word of Warning

For you: Be careful when you handle these critters. Try not to touch them at all. They don't like to be caught, so they may try to bite and/or sting. Remember, they are trying to defend themselves!

For the bug: Be careful when you handle these critters. They're very small and very tender. Some tend to lose legs or wings very easily. Then they can't move well. If you pinch them too hard, some will collapse and die. God put people in charge of his creation to care for it, not to mess it up. Please be careful!

ILLUSTRATION BY SCOTT HOLLADAY



What Kind of Critter Is This?

If you want to know more about the creature you caught, start with this brief guide.

1. How many legs does it have?

- A. If it has six legs it's some kind of insect. Go to number 2.
- B. If it has eight legs, it's probably some kind of spider or "Daddy-long-legs." There are more than 35,000 different kinds of spiders in the world. Each kind has its own special place in creation.
- C. If it has more legs than you can count, it's a probably a centipede or millipede.

2. How many wings does it have?

- A. If it has no wings, it's probably an ant. There are more than 12,000 species of ants in the world. Each kind of ant has its own purpose in creation.
- B. If it has two wings, it's some kind of fly. There are more than 87,000 kinds of flies in the world. Each fly has a job to do in creation.
- C. Most other insects have four wings.

No one knows for sure how many different insects there are in creation. We know only that God made each insect with its own special place to live and its own special purpose.



Gear Up

Here are some things you'll need:

- Newspaper to sit on
- Clear plastic containers with lids
- Light-colored pillowcase
- Magnifying glass, if you have one
- Backpack

Be sure to dress warmly enough for the weather. Remember that you'll be sitting still in shady places at times. Then stuff all your "stuff" into the backpack. Now you're ready to go!



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What's It For?

Here's what some common little critters do.

- Bees pollinate flowers. They're hairy and have pollen baskets on their legs. As they collect nectar and pollen, they spread pollen between flowers. Then the flowers can make fruits.
- Flies clean up messes. Think of the garbage where flies live. Do you want to clean that up? Someone must. Young flies love to do that.
- Brown and yellow paper wasps help keep flies in check. They feed their young "flyburgers."
- Spiders keep the bug population in check. Centipedes help spiders. They also prey on bugs and little creepy-crawlers.
- Lots of black wasps help keep spiders in check. Each wasp hunts only one kind of spider.
- Daddy-long-legs keep fields and forests clean. They eat dead and dying plants. Millipedes and pillbugs help Daddy-long-legs. They eat old vegetation and dead stuff.



You get the idea? Give thanks to God for how creation fits together so very well.

