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Press Release

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## **Annual Insect Fear Film Festival Celebrates 40 Years**

The 40<sup>th</sup> Annual Insect Fear Film Festival (IFFF) will be held on **Saturday, March 4, 2023**, at Foellinger Auditorium, on the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign campus. Hosted by the Entomology Graduate Students Association (EGSA) in the Department of Entomology at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, this year's theme is **Living Fossils**. The Insect Fear Film Festival was created by Professor May Berenbaum, in 1984, to bring insect awareness and appreciation to the campus and community; surpassing even our most optimistic expectations, since that time 39 years of IFFF have brought more than 90 feature films, 80 animated shorts, and 39 t-shirts to more than 12,000 festival-goers. Since its beginnings in March 1984, IFFF has been free and open to the campus and community.

Every year, IFFF offers a program based on a theme; in 2023, focusing on Living Fossils allows us to bring unfamiliar ancient arthropods and near-arthropods to the public for the first time. Living fossils are contemporary species that are practically identical in appearance to extinct fossil species. The first feature film, "The Monster That Challenged the World," showcases what appears to be a giant marine velvetworm, fossil forms of which date back 450 million years; the second feature, "Joe's Apartment," features cockroaches, fossil forms of which from 350 million years ago resemble living forms. Also featured are episodes of "Pike's Lagoon," an animated series featuring Limbo the horseshoe crab (ancient aquatic relatives of spiders dating back 440 million years). A petting zoo will provide an opportunity for festival attendees to touch these ancient denizens of Planet Earth.

More information about the event can be found at the EGSA website:

<https://publish.illinois.edu/uiuc-egsa/iff/>. **This event is FREE and open to the public. Activities begin at 5:30 pm CST, and shorts and feature film introductions start at 7:30 pm.** A full schedule will be available on our website. Among activities:

- An insect petting zoo
- Specimens on display from the Illinois Natural History Museum
- Fossil insect Bugscope (scanning electron microscope close-ups projected to giant size)
- Insect crafts
- A gallery of the annual IFFF art contest featuring insect-themed artwork by local K-12 students
- A conversation with Jacob Lenard, creator, director, writer of "Pike's Lagoon" (6 pm)



**March 4, 2023**  
**40th Anniversary**

Back in person for the first time since 2020, we look forward to seeing you on Saturday, March 4<sup>th</sup>! Before then, stop in to visit the exhibit at the Funk ACES Library on 40 years of IFFF. For more information, including a link to purchase t-shirts with the logo seen above, visit the IFFF website, our Facebook page, follow us on Twitter, or contact Jon Tetlie ([jtetlie2@illinois.edu](mailto:jtetlie2@illinois.edu)) or Ed Hsieh ([emhsieh2@illinois.edu](mailto:emhsieh2@illinois.edu)).

With the festival going on for the last 40 years, it has made a large impact on generations of local school children and helped to grow the community's love for our important insect friends. This free public event is just one of the ways our Entomology Department reaches out to the local residents to share our passion for science.

*"I first attended the Insect Fear Film Festival in 2006 (I still have that year's t-shirt too!). I didn't stay for all the fearful films back then, though I have faint memories of watching a giant praying mantis rampage around Washington DC. To my 2nd grade self, the festival represented an opportunity for me to not only engage with insects more closely than ever before, but also to celebrate their impacts on arts, culture, science, and our society with my local community. The festival was instrumental in shaping my interests to further pursue the life sciences (and ultimately entomology itself—getting to hold giant hornworms, hissing cockroaches, and tarantulas as an 8 year old will do that to you). Now, as a graduate student in the very same department that first inspired me to pursue entomology, I get to return the favor to my community and show the next generation how extraordinary and beautiful insects can be." - Lincoln Taylor, Masters's student in the Dolezal Lab*