

Drosophila researchers are renowned for devising creative ways of studying their beloved flies. Researchers are already lining up to study Mackay's wild isolates, with plans to study learning and memory, wing morphology, body size, social behaviour, circadian rhythm and responses to different odours and drugs. Hasson will try to determine why some flies like to lay their eggs in grapes whereas others prefer oranges, and Anholt will test responses

to alcohol using his 'inebriometer', a device that measures how quickly flies become woozy from ethanol fumes.

Richards says that similar projects in other insects, such as mosquitoes or honeybees, could be on the horizon. "The cost of sequencing is coming down so quickly; in the future it'll just be a normal grant proposal to do 500 insects," he says.

Heidi Ledford

Online anthropology draws protest from aboriginal group

As Europe's museums begin archiving their collections in digital format, skeletons are emerging — and not just of the physical variety. One South African tribe already says it will oppose the inclusion of images of its people's remains in any multimedia format.

The University of Vienna has started to digitize the collection made in the early twentieth century by Rudolf Pöch, considered one of anthropology's founding fathers. The project, headed by Maria Teschler-Nicola, will improve the collection's accessibility for researchers and store the delicate material in a sustainable way, using electronic records of physiological measurements as well as two- and three-dimensional scans.

But the full collection, which includes human remains and thousands of ethnographic artefacts, was gathered using unethical methods, such as grave-robbing.

Around the turn of the twentieth century, anthropological adventurers in search of exotic artefacts collected skeletal remains from ethnic groups in Africa, Asia and Australia, and sold them to museums in the West. There, they were often displayed in exhibitions purporting to show the evolution of humans from these supposedly 'primitive' origins.

Museums in Europe and the United States have now stopped displaying the remains of modern humans that were not acquired by donation. But it was not until 1995 that the Natural History Museum Vienna removed an exhibit depicting a Negro man as being below Caucasians on the evolutionary scale of development.

"There are maybe 300 sensitive cases in our collection," says Teschler-Nicola. "We don't want to repeat the same mistakes, but we don't have any guidelines." Such bones

can be important research material for archaeoanthropologists, which complicates the museum's decision.

The Natural History Museum in London is also planning to digitally record its entire collection, and has yet to decide what to do about its own contentious human remains. The issue was raised at a meeting organized at the museum in March to survey the opinion of leading international scientists. An internal report from the meeting is thought to endorse continuing scientific study, including digitization, on human remains that may be subject to repatriation. "The decision on how to move forward is yet to be taken," says John Jackson, science-policy coordinator at the museum. "There are constraints on whether those remains should be in the collection — whether it is ethically right has to be considered very carefully."

"When repatriation requests are made there is an expectation that all studies have been done. This is not the case," says Robert Hedges, an archaeologist at the University of Oxford, UK, who attended the meeting. "There is every reason for studying remains that are vulnerable to repatriation. You have to be aware that one is liable to lose information if remains are repatriated."

Roger Chennells, legal adviser to the San Institute, a South African non-governmental organization that campaigns for the repatriation of the aboriginal San people's remains, some of which are in the Pöch collection, told *Nature*. "We have not been consulted, and we do not support any photographic archiving of our people's remains — we are opposed to it," he says.

The University of Vienna and the National History Museum in London both hope to draw up guidelines in the next few weeks.

Tony Scully

ON THE RECORD

“We have ICE!!!! Yes, ICE, *WATER ICE* on Mars! w00t!!! Best day ever!!.”

Comment from 19 June on the Mars Phoenix 'twitter' feed, where team members leave updates in the persona of their plucky lander.

SCORECARD

Runner reaction time
Canadian scientists have found that being close to the starting gun startles runners into a speedier start. The team suggests that Canada's Olympic runners wear cranked-up hearing aids in Beijing to get the best reaction time off the blocks.

Mail delivery time
A 'slow art' project at Bournemouth University in the United Kingdom uses three snails crawling around a tank to pick up e-mail signals and pass them on. The 'real snail mail' can take months to be delivered.

NUMBER CRUNCH
£9,999.99 The 'N-prize' cash award for launching "an impossibly small satellite on a ludicrously small budget".

£999.99 The maximum allowed cost of the launch.

9 orbits How far it has to fly.

9.99–19.99 grams
The required weight range of the satellite.

0.1–1 kilogram The weight range of the smallest common category of satellites, known as 'picosatellites'. One popular one, CubeSat, costs about £20,000 (US\$40,000) per launch.

The prize rules state that "imaginative use of string and chewing gum is encouraged".

Sources: Phoenix Twitter, Edmonton Journal, BBC, www.n-prize.com



EUREKA/ALAMY; K. TAYLOR/NATUREPL.COM

SIDELINES