

# A family of insect new to Britain discovered in the Natural History Museum's Wildlife Garden

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Credit Daniel Whitmore/The Trustees of the Natural History Museum

A new paper published today (28 June) reports a new family of flies has been discovered in the UK for the first time. The Cottony cushion scale parasite fly (*Cryptochetum iceryae*) is part of the Cryptochetidae family of flies. Specimens were discovered by the Natural History Museum's

Senior Curator of Hymenoptera, David Notton, in the museum's wildlife garden, and identified with help from scientists Daniel Whitmore and Barbara Ismay.

The species, which originates from Australia, is known for being a useful predator of [scale](#) insects such as the Cottony cushion scale which is a pest of more than 50 families of plant including common garden and greenhouse plants, particularly Citrus (e.g. oranges and lemons) and Pittosporum (Cheesewoods). The tiny cushion scale parasite flies are recognised by their striking metallic colors, chunky build and large antennae and have been deliberately introduced into Israel and Northern and South America to help control the population of the Cottony cushion scale.

The Natural History Museum's David Notton said: "It's absolutely fantastic that we've identified a new family of fly in Britain. It really shows the importance of urban green spaces such as the museum's Wildlife Garden. I love spending time with nature and looking out for what's in my back [garden](#) too—it's great for mental health and there are so many wonderful things to discover."

Notton's research focuses on faunal change in UK biodiversity as well as developing identification tools. The specimen collected has been digitized as part of the museum's digital collection and the data and images released on the museum's [Data Portal](#) so that citizen scientists, researchers and data analysts from all over the world can access this exciting resource.

The museum will soon be embarking on a project to protect and increase the habitats within the gardens at its South Kensington site. The Urban Nature Project will develop a model for best practice in the research, monitoring and management of urban biodiversity to protect it for future generations whilst also creating a welcoming space where visitors can

discover and connect with nature.

The paper is published today in *Dipterists Digest*.

**More information:** Whitmore, D., Notton, D. G. & Ismay, B. 2019. The family Cryptochetidae (Diptera) new to Britain, with the first European record of *Cryptochetum iceryae* (Williston). *Dipterists Digest* (new series) 26, 71-72.

Provided by Natural History Museum

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