



K-State Department of Entomology Spotlight Article: Tom Phillips

Entomologists are biologists with jobs, remarked Tom Phillips.

After finding a love for research in forest entomology, Phillips let life lead him where the research was and trees mostly aren't.

"I've lived in the Midwest more than anywhere else in my adult life. I never thought I would," Phillips said.

Growing up in Camp Hill, Pennsylvania, a suburb of Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, Phillips has lived in upstate New York, Florida, Wisconsin, Hawaii, Oklahoma and Kansas.

Phillips's post-doctoral work focused on biosystematics in a group of pine weevils. His job following his post-doctoral research focused on stored products.

Beetle pheromones was the common connection, Phillips said.

Now his commodity area is stored product insects. Phillips focuses on alternative control measures and integrated pest management, which has become more important following the EPA banning methyl bromide as a fumigant. Phillips is looking for an alternative to methyl bromide fumigation.

"It was a strong combination of enhancing my professional development and my research interests," Phillips said on coming to Kansas State University.

Preceding John Ruberson as department head, Phillips went back into regular faculty to enjoy his research interests.

"I enjoy running a lab with graduate students and postdocs," said Phillips.

He finds interacting with students in his lab promotes his understanding and research interests by helping them develop their projects.

Phillips also enjoys the city of Manhattan.

"It's the big university in the small town, it's similar to Oklahoma

State University, where I was before here," he said.

Among the aspects of Manhattan Phillips enjoys, is the cultural side of the campus. Phillips enjoys attending the McCain Performance Series and watching the university arts spill into the community.

Phillips himself sings in the Masterworks Chorale, which is led by a K-State music professor. He recently performed in Rhapsody, which featured the Kansas City Ballet, Lawrence Children's Choir, Flint Hills Children's Choir and Flint Hills Masterworks Chorale in addition to the K-State Grand Chorus.

Preceding his position in the Masterworks Chorale, Phillips was involved in a barbershop chorus.

"It sounds like I'm a music guy, but not entirely," said Phillips.

His pets, two dogs and a cat, also monopolize Phillips and his wife Stacey's time. However, they enjoy taking advantage of traveling opportunities together.

"I don't want to give bias to any one country but recently Thailand was a beautiful place," said Phillips.

He reminisced on the nice winter weather and lush green vegetation. Also, on the trip Phillips experienced riding an elephant.

Traveling to Italy was another of many favorite trips Phillips has taken. On that adventure, Phillips visited his mother's birthplace.

Being half Italian, Phillips enjoys visiting extended family and experiencing family traditions through traditional Italian weddings and eating home-cooked Italian cuisine.

Phillips also enjoys his children and grandchild. His daughter Sarah and her family, as well as his son Daniel, live in the Denver, Colorado, area. He also has two step-daughters, who reside in Manhattan, Kansas.