

# Packing a punch

Torquay Museum opens its new temporary exhibition Six-Legged Superheroes: Insects Saving the Planet on Saturday, May 27, and this show is packing a real punch, writes BARRY CHANDLER.

With environmental concerns high on everyone's minds, the museum has created an exhibition to reimagine our insect neighbours - whose role in stabilising healthy ecosystems goes largely unnoticed - as comic book superheroes!

The exhibition will take visitors on a journey through the incredible story of insects. Told through comic book-style interpretation, visitors will learn of insects' distant origin story and their rise to gods in the ancient world. It examines the extraordinary superpowers of insects: flight, speed, super strength, venom and their indestructibility. Incredible powers evolved to help them survive in a hostile world.

The story will develop to show how insects work within our planet's ecosystems and how they use their extraordinary powers to benefit the world we live in. It will then examine the existential threat they face. Over 40 per cent of all insects are declining and a third are now endangered. The data suggests that the rate of decline is at least 2.5 per cent per year. According to research analysis, a quarter of insects could be wiped out within just a decade.

There is a real obligation to inspire the next generation's understanding of the environment and more significantly the role played by insects in underpinning it all. Therefore, with this in mind, the museum contacted Marvel-Disney to ask to borrow the costumes from the Ant-Man franchise. To the museum team's amazement, the film production



The Ant-Man costume display.

company said yes but as the costumes were in California, there were significant costs involved in shipping and security. The museum tried for a year to get grants to bring these costumes to Torbay but when the Arts Council England turned down its National Portfolio Organisation application earlier this year, the last chance of funding was gone.

Museum staff felt this subject was just too important not to go ahead with the exhibition, so they created their own cosplay Ant-Man and Wasp costumes to complement the museum's largest collection, insects! There are over 120,000 specimens, from all over the world at Torquay Museum. It's one of the most important collections in the South West and the team wants to use these to change public perception of these vital creatures.

The science in the exhibition is based on Dave Goulson's best-selling book Silent Earth: Averting the Insect Apocalypse, which is both terrifying and inspiring in equal measure.

Now is the best time to get a museum ticket. There are two temporary exhibitions, May the Toys Be With You and Six-Legged Superheroes, and more new exhibitions will be arriving for the summer and autumn. The ticket allows entry to the museum for a year, so if you get yours now, you will get access to five different exhibitions. Don't forget there is a 20 per cent discount for TQ postcode residents and a 25 per cent discount for all Blue Light Card holders.

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