

# New Life Form Found at South African Truck Stop

[Man discovers a new life-form at a South African truck stop](#) [1]

An order is one of the big categories of life, a big branch on evolution's tree. Animal species are named every day, but finding another new order would be equivalent to discovering bats having not previously known they existed. Bats constitute their own order, as do primates, beetles, flies and rodents.

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The Mantophasmatodes look, inescapably, larval (they lack wings, for example, and have no ocelli) and so Picker like others mistook them for immature versions of some known creature, perhaps some weird kind of cricket. When more than three quarters of all species of animals are not yet named, it is hard to know which ones to get excited about finding. Picker went through his collections looking for specimens of Mantophasmatodes. Within weeks, he had found twenty-nine individual Mantophasmatodes. Thirteen living species of Mantophasmatodea have now been named and placed in 10 genera and three different families.

In other words, Zompro has done something more amazing than finding a rare new order of animals. He has discovered a common order of animals that everyone else had missed, a discovery in plain view.

Mantophasmatodes are not a far away species confined to some remote hunk of rock. They are a whole suite of species, some of which live places as mundane as backyards. They are also a kind of a living extended metaphor for what lurks around us unnoticed all the time.

I was always told as a child that I shouldn't question so much and just accept what adults have decided. I am sure I was very annoying questioning everything. Especially how amazingly boring they make school. I love learning stuff. In general I did not love school. But questioning that school really should do a better job of making it fun to learn was seen as being a bothersome kid. I should just accept this is how school is and learn. I still think I was right. School is horribly designed to nurture the innate curiosity of people. Rather than seeing the kids that point this out as troublemakers we should see those that perpetuate the current system as troublemakers.

I still remember my sophomore year in high school I was taught by a biology teacher that new very little. They had been a 2nd grade teacher for like 15 years and due to seniority (they didn't need as many 2nd grade teachers I guess) she bumped the biology teacher from the year before and we were stuck learning from her. In fact, any decently interesting question was more likely to be answered by a student (Peter - who then went to Princeton and then to play for the National Symphony) after the teacher said she didn't know.

I found biology horrible. And it probably took a decade or more for me to finally

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notcie how amazingly cool biology. Fantastically cool. The amount of just super interesting biology is so vast that I have huge amounts of great stuff I get to look forward to learning. My teacher made it even worse, but frankly the way it is taught (I would imagine) is pretty bad even if the teacher is good. My high school was populated largely by the kids of Professors and compared to other schools in the USA I was told many times was fantastic (and the data seemed to support that - I believe we have more national merit scholars the year I graduated than all but 1 other public school in the country).

We need to do a much better job of harnessing the native desire to learn people have instead of killing it (which we do far to often). It really is a tragedy. It isn't noticed because you can get by alright without loving learning. But it reduces the lives people have when they have their love of learning crushed. I didn't have mine crushed but when I look around at many adults they seem to have done so to a large extent (sometimes it pokes through in a hobby or with their kids). And of course many adults kept a strong love of learning (all those geeks for example - and don't forget the biologists).

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