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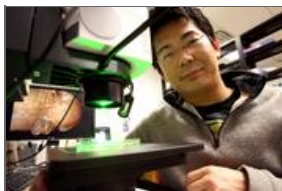
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Miami professor studying evolution through beetles

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Yoshinori Tomoyasu, assistant professor of zoology at Miami University, studies coleoptera tribolium beetles at Miami University in hopes of learning more about evolution. Staff photos by Nick Daggy

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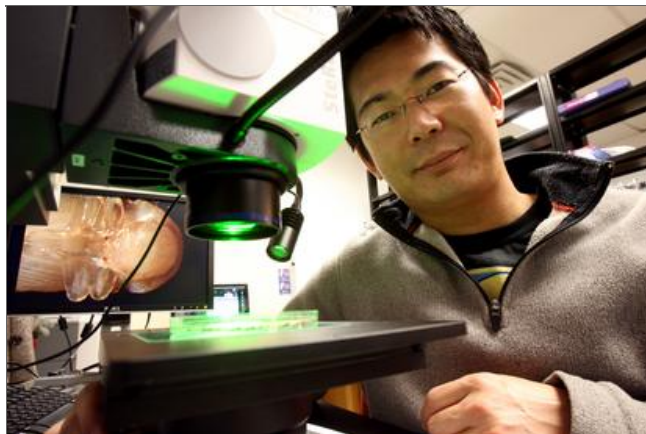
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'It's just a small modification that makes us different'

By Meagan Engle, Staff Writer

Updated 11:53 PM Sunday, January 17, 2010

OXFORD — Yoshinori Tomoyasu is studying perhaps science's biggest issue peering into a microscope examining a tray of tiny beetles, each smaller than a grain of rice.

The Miami professor of zoology is using beetles — an insect he's collected since he was a boy — to study evolution.

"The bottom line is, I want to understand how evolution works," he said from his two-room laboratory in Miami's Pearson Hall.

Tomoyasu started his research with beetles eight years ago in Kansas. Tomoyasu wanted to compare the bugs to his earlier research with fruit flies, which are commonly used by

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scientists because findings can be applied to humans.

“The genes important to make flies and to make beetles and to make humans are very similar,” he said. “The question is why we look so different.”

“It’s not the gene itself that makes us different, it’s how we use the gene,” Tomoyasu said. “It’s just a small modification that makes us different.”

Tomoyasu, who joined Miami in 2008, has already made an impact with his research.

“Basic research is a huge part of what we do in the sciences at Miami,” said Bruce Cochrane, dean of the graduate school. “It gives students, undergraduate and graduate, a chance to learn about that process and participate in it. When we have someone of his caliber participating, it benefits Miami greatly.”

Tomoyasu and his colleagues were recently published in an issue of Current Biology for their findings that the main framework of the wing patterning genes was mostly conserved over time between beetles and flies, even after 300 million years of separation.

“That means evolution works very conservatively. They don’t want to change too much. They’re just modifying it,” he said.

Tomoyasu said he still has much to discover and hopes to one day have some good examples to teach evolution.

“I don’t know much of how it happened or when it happened,” he said of his research. “It’s just the beginning.”

Contact this reporter at (513) 523-4139 or mengle@coxohio.com.

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Buddy, I believe in God, but the God you are worshipping has nothing to do with the one we worship. My church is doing everything to help those people down there. I'd like to have some kind religious words with you, one on one, if you know what I mean.

Glenn
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TRUTH4U
8:39 PM, 1/18/2010

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I wonder which beetle god would drive...I'm thinking a 57' oval myself. Probably not later than a 70' or a new beetle (too sissified). Yeah, definety aircooled. I don't think he would need insurance either. WBWGD?

The Rocket
7:28 PM, 1/18/2010

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The science world has spent hundreds of trillions of dollars and countless years of time trying to prove the Bible is wrong and there is no God. Even created a super telescope to look back millions of years in time.

What have they discovered?

Nothing yet!

Laus Deo
4:02 PM, 1/18/2010

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Not the original Maverick. Who ever posted this under my moniker is a sicko!!!

Real Maverick
1:30 PM, 1/18/2010

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