

# **RUM reopens the Museum of Entomology and Tropical Biodiversity: a scientific legacy for Puerto Rico** <sup>[1]</sup>

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The University of Puerto Rico's Mayagüez Campus (RUM) celebrated the reopening of the Museum of Entomology and Tropical Biodiversity during an official ceremony held at the North Botanical Garden in Río Piedras.

The Museum, the only one of its kind in Puerto Rico, houses the island's main repository of invertebrates, with more than 52,000 specimens of high historical and scientific value, including rare groups and unique species not found in other collections worldwide. Its holdings are distinguished by a strong representation of insects, and its mission includes offering educational tours, facilitating loans for research, and maintaining an active program in digitization, conservation, and study.



### *Suministrada.*

“Although it originated at the Agricultural Experiment Station (EEA) of the College of Agricultural Sciences (CCA) at RUM, this museum belongs to everyone: it is a legacy for all of Puerto Rico, it is our first science museum. And its mission implicitly includes expanding knowledge of our fauna and also preserving it and inspiring others to respect it, because it has always been my philosophy: what one can understand, one can respect, and what one can respect, one can preserve,” said Dr. Rosa Amelia Franqui, director of the Museum and professor at the CCA.

“The first question we always ask ourselves when tackling challenges is: what am I working with? In our case, knowing the identity of the species is the first step toward solving the problem or enabling alternatives. We also work on the preservation of insects, not only those in the collection but also those that are beneficial, such as bees, Puerto Rico’s endemic butterflies, and carpenter bees. Many of these species go unnoticed, they are disappearing, and they are extremely important for the ecosystem,” added the entomologist.

After a full renovation, the former Food Technology Laboratory building of the Agricultural Experiment Station was transformed into a modern facility featuring exhibition halls, laboratories, and specialized areas for safeguarding the collection. This reopening marks a milestone for science in Puerto Rico by providing a permanent home for a collection begun in 1910 and considered the oldest and most complete in the Caribbean.

“This reopening marks the beginning of a new cycle of scientific and academic activities in facilities specifically designed to preserve and study insects and tropical biodiversity at the University, for the enjoyment of the public. We now have exhibition halls, preservation space, and a laboratory for insect identification — a very valuable tool for science and education,” stated Professor Carlos A. Flores Ortega, associate dean and deputy director of the EEA.

Meanwhile, Dr. Zayira Jordán Conde, president of the UPR, highlighted the project’s importance for education and research in the country.

“This Museum represents an invaluable legacy for Puerto Rico. It is not only a space for scientific research, but also an educational resource that will allow our communities to understand the importance of biodiversity and preservation. With this reopening, we reaffirm the University of Puerto Rico’s commitment to science, education, and sustainability,” she said.

Similarly, Dr. Agustín Rullán Toro, chancellor of RUM, emphasized the impact the Museum will have on academic training and on the campus’s international profile.

“For the University of Puerto Rico at Mayagüez, this renewed space is a source of great pride. The Museum of Entomology and Tropical Biodiversity strengthens our academic and scientific mission and positions RUM as a leader in the conservation of natural resources in the Caribbean. These modern facilities are an essential tool for research and for inspiring new generations of scientists,” he concluded.

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