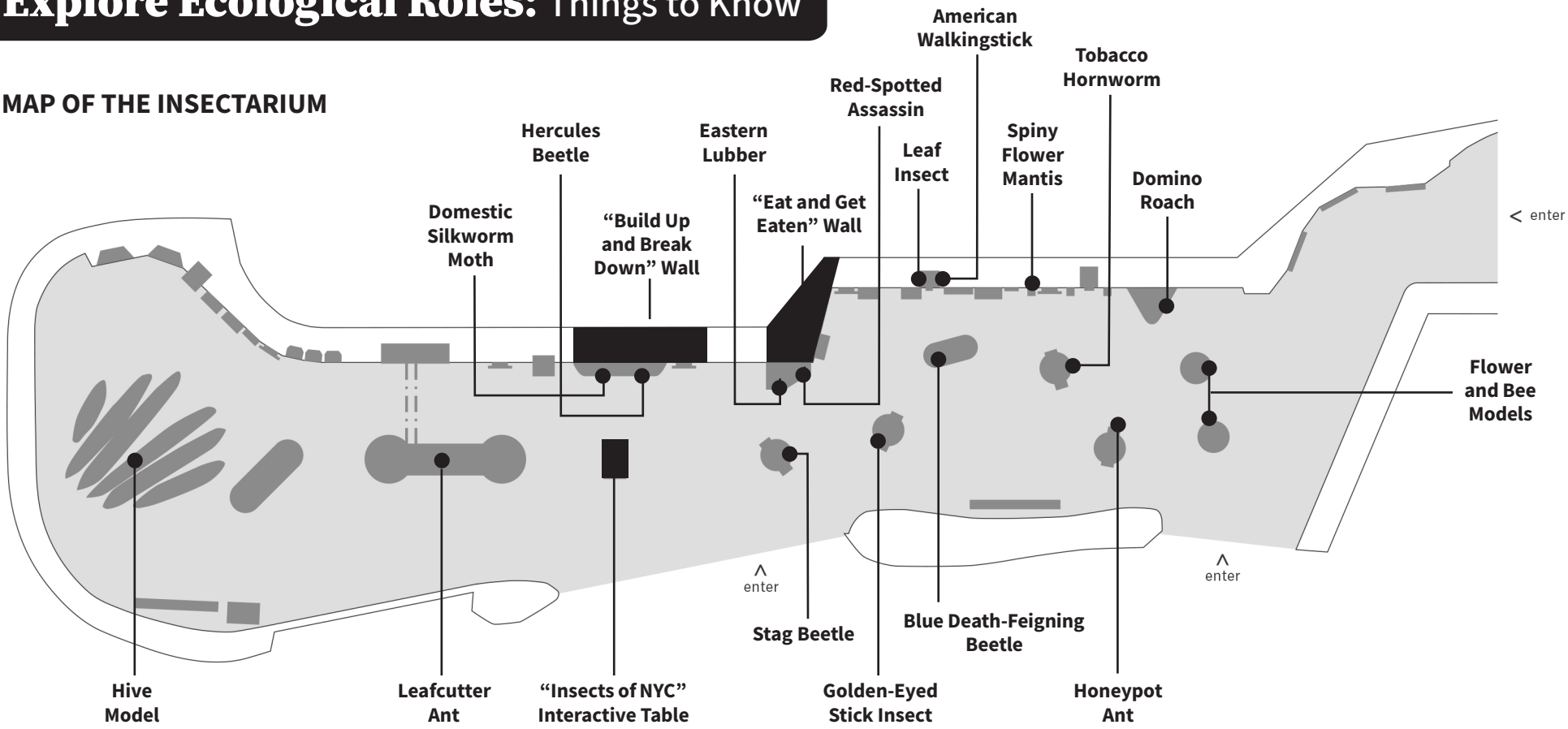
Explore Ecological Roles: Things to Know

MAP OF THE INSECTARIUM

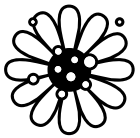


ECOLOGICAL ROLES

Builders
make shelters to provide protection and food storage for themselves and for "guest" species that live with them

Decomposers
break down rotting plants, dung, and carcasses, which removes waste, recycles nutrients, and creates soil

Herbivores
eat plants, and every plant species on Earth probably has at least one insect species that eats it



Pollinators
are necessary for the fertilization of about 75% of food-crop plant species and 80% of flowering plant species

Predators
eat insects and other animals, including animals bigger than themselves

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Explore Ecological Roles

How does an insect's ecological role affect other organisms in their shared ecosystem?

1. Choose four live insects to observe closely. For each insect:

- **Name** and **sketch** it
- **Record** its ecosystem
- **Circle** its ecological role(s)

builder

decomposer

herbivores

pollinator

predator

2. Visit these areas of the hall to learn about the ecological roles of the four insects:

- "Build Up and Break Down" wall (builder, decomposer)
- "Eat and Get Eaten" wall (herbivore, predator)
- Flower and bee models (pollinator)
- Hive model (pollinator)

Add notes about each insect:

- one trait that enables the insect to perform its role
- how the insect's role affects other organisms in their shared ecosystem

Explore more! Visit the "Insects of NYC" interactive table to learn about insect roles in a local ecosystem.

Insect Name: _____

Ecosystem: _____ **Role:**

Notes: _____

Insect Name: _____

Ecosystem: _____ **Role:**

Notes: _____

Insect Name: _____

Ecosystem: _____ **Role:**

Notes: _____

Insect Name: _____

Ecosystem: _____ **Role:**

Notes: _____

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