



Lucy Evelyn Cheesman

Little Lucy always wanted to explore the world around her and make exciting new discoveries. Sometimes, she liked to stroll slowly through the garden and notice wonderful, exotic new bugs. Often, she came home with frogs in her pockets, moss in her hair and glow-worms cradled and twirled around her fingers because, “Mum, I need to figure out what makes them glow!” A scientific discovery day well spent!

Since her family didn’t have very much money, they could only afford to send one of their kids to school. And since she lived at a time that was more than 100 years ago and girls weren’t educated as much then – her parents decided to send Robert, her brother, to school instead. This shattered Lucy’s dreams of becoming a vet, which was already a big, nearly impossible dream at that time, the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons only let men study to become vets!

Lucy didn’t give up though. She kept trying to study about and help animals in every way she could. Where others saw ‘just bugs’, Lucy saw a world of adventure and beauty. In their buggy eyes, striped limbs and shiny elytra (el-li-tra, the hard wings of a beetle), she saw stories that needed to be told and entire species that needed to be recognized.



And she didn't have a lot of equipment to do this with either! Nobody sold bug collecting pants to women at the time, Lucy just stitched her own at home. Many of her samples were collected using a tin billycan and simple net – she even invited children just like you to help her.

She walked *everywhere*, and since she had been born the same year as the Natural History Museum, whenever she noticed a new bug, fly, lizard, or leech, she would sketch it, write stories about it, and bring back a sample to the museum. She collected over 70,000 specimens for the museum and even has a fly named after her!

Her bug hunts took her far and wide, and she went to many places, including the Galápagos Islands, Tuamotu Atolls, and New Guinea. When it rained, she would take refuge under an umbrella made out of bark. When she got stuck in a giant cobweb, she patiently sawed at it with a nail file to set herself free. Often, she would go to the same place in different seasons, because she knew each season has a wonderfully different range of bugs, butterflies, and lizards!

Lucy was the first woman who got a job at the London Zoo in the insect house and became known as the entomologist of the world. Her directors wrote no mountain top was too high, and no jungle too deep, for Lucy to do adventuring in and collect bugs. She received the OBE, the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire award, for her services in science.

But she was away at Aneityum Island in the South Pacific when it was awarded. Even at the very young age of 73 right after a hip replacement surgery, armed with her can and net, Lucy was off chasing butterflies and having her own adventure.

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