

# Wayne State Researchers Study Cognitive Decline

Plus, a quick look at a couple of other science updates from around the state

**Steve Friess** - September 28, 2021



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**W**e're taking a look at three studies in this month's Science Mitten spotlight. Read below to learn what local researchers discovered about youth concussions, how they approached naming dozens of species of ambrosia beetles, and what they uncovered about how people predict their own cognitive decline.

## **More awareness, more youth concussions?**

A quarter of teenagers in a 2020 survey self-reported having had a concussion at some point in their lives, up from one-fifth in 2016 — leading researchers to wonder if there are actually more head injuries or if the public education campaign around them is causing the uptick in reports, according to a study co-authored by University of Michigan School of Nursing researcher Philip Veliz that appeared in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*. The data is based on a survey of nearly 53,000 students in which kids were asked if they'd ever been diagnosed with a concussion and, if so, how many times. The increase came during a period in which emergency-room data show fewer youths being seen with concussions, Veliz says, but it may be that they are

being treated for concussions in other healthcare settings.

## **Beetle-mania, Sci-Fi Edition**

A pair of Michigan State University entomologists and avowed science fiction nerds have named the more than three dozen species of ambrosia beetles they discovered in Central and South America for a litany of fictional women from favorite TV shows, films, and books. Sarah Smith and Anthony Cognato, both of MSU's Cook Arthropod Research Collection, paid, uh, tribute to Katniss Everdeen of *The Hunger Games*, and honored Kara Thrace of *Battlestar Galactica* and Nyota Uhuru of *Star Trek*, according to a report in the journal *ZooKeys*. The researchers say they were inspired by the fact that the female beetles of these species are hardy creatures who can travel across the world. "You have these adventurous females that were blown off their log or had their wood-encased home thrown into the ocean by a mudslide" and somehow survived to repopulate, Cognato says.

## **Patients predict their own dementia**

Older people who complain about cognitive declines even though they show no clinically detected impairments frequently are presaging their brain disorders, according to a Wayne State University study published in the journal *Alzheimer's Research & Therapy*. WSU gerontologists Jessica Damoiseaux and Raymond Viviano followed 69 women ages 50 to 85 who reported cognitive issues for three years by taking a series of MRIs over three years. They found significant changes in two areas of the brain that may have been noticeable in their earlier forms by the patients but not visible on scans.

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### **Steve Friess**

Steve Friess is news and features editor at Hour Detroit and a contributing writer for Newsweek. A Long Island native who earned a journalism degree at Northwestern University, Friess worked at newspapers in Rockford, Illinois, Las Vegas, and South Florida before launching a freelance career in Beijing, China, where he served as chief China correspondent for USA Today. After his return to the U.S. in 2003, he settled in Las Vegas,

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