## A Respected Scientist Comes Out Against Evolution – and Loses His Wikipedia Page Attempts by proponents of 'intelligent design' to save

German paleontologist Günter Bechly's entry backfires, highlighting how Wikipedia struggles to keep scientific content clean of politics Omer Beniakob Nov 17, 2017 5:00 PM



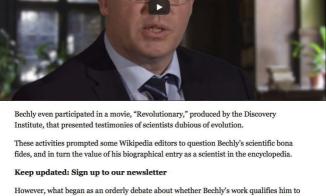
including groundbreaking studies he conducted into the evolution of dragonfly wings – and was even a curator at Stuttgart's State Museum of Natural History. At least until

2016. That's when he first came out against evolution and in favor of intelligent design. He found himself embraced by the religious right in the United States, becoming a pawn in their political struggle over the world's origin story. In October, Bechly's English-language Wikipedia page was deleted, in a case that highlights how the crowdsourced online encyclopedia tries, and many times succeeds, in fending off attempts to politicize scientific content, even in the face of aggressive attempts by religious conservatives

paleontologist. He had published numerous papers in prestigious, peer-review journals

make waves after he joined the Discovery Institute, a conservative, self-styled "think tank" promoting "intelligent design" - the pseudoscience rehash of creationism and the idea that modern science alone cannot explain the existence or diversity of life on Earth.

Bechly's objection to what scientists call the "modern evolutionary synthesis" began to



- soon deteriorated into a battle royal between science-minded Wikipedia guidelines editors and promoters of creationism.

have his own entry in Wikipedia and whether the entry about him meets the criteria required for academics - standards thoroughly covered by Wikipedia's general notability

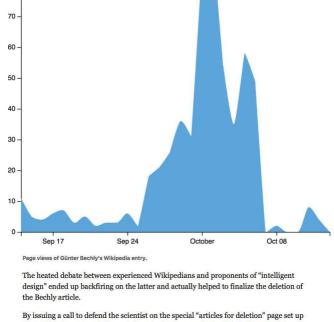
"This whole process of trying to delete Dr. Bechly proves the small-mindedness that prevails these days and the threat deep thinkers like him pose to certain members of

## society. His interpretation of Origins issues are his personal business. He is an

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outstanding academic and scientist in his own right; if he hadn't changed his stance this wouldn't even be an issue," one anonymous user wrote, going on to summarize Bechly's contribution to the field of his expertise. Other defenders noted that Bechly had a number of species named after him and that his academic citation ranking (in what is called the h-index) was high and thus justified an article. But their true intentions were revealed with claims against Wikipedia's "evolution warriors" and its "anti-creationist bias."



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been deleted from Wikipedia.

Wikipedia by calling external actors into the fray.

be going on," one skeptical Wikipedia user wrote.

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process of consensus-based decision through discussion.

ning one-time editors not to vote. These one-time editors' lack of experience became clear when they began voting in favor

of keeping the article on Wikipedia - a practice not employed in the English version of Wikipedia since 2016, when editors voted to exchange the way articles are deleted for a

for Bechly, the anti-evolution missionaries broke a cardinal role in Wikipedia calling for "no canvassing," which bars any attempts to influence the outcome of a discussion on

"Given the number of apparently-unrelated, mostly-inactive users who have popped out of the woodwork to leave bad deletion rationales, I suspect some off-site canvassing may

Moreover, due to the massive influx of new editors, the article's deletion debate was also posted on an internal Wikipedia forum meant to combat conspiracy theories, which led to a counter-surge of experienced Wikipedia editors entering the debate and calling for Bechly's deletion. The move only fueled anger among pro-creationists, who claimed this

too was a form of liberal canvassing. But their claims of equivalence between the sides fell on deaf ears, and by October 6, a week after the debate got underway, the article had

Accusations of anti-creationism bias are not germane to the purpose of [the article-fordeletion debate], and we don't consider the stances of an article subject on a contention topic in judging notability," the deleting editor wrote, explaining that, "On balance, it seems like the case that the sources do not establish [Bechly's] notability is more thoroughly argued than the case that they do, and there is no indication that any other notability criteria is met."

If Bechly's article was originally introduced due to his scientific work, it was deleted due

to his having become a poster child for the creationist movement.

Here is the version of Bechly's Wikipedia article that was deleted, now nowhere to be found online: Mandack Mechan WIKIPEDIA Günter Bechly

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