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Title: Preparing Arthropod Skeletons

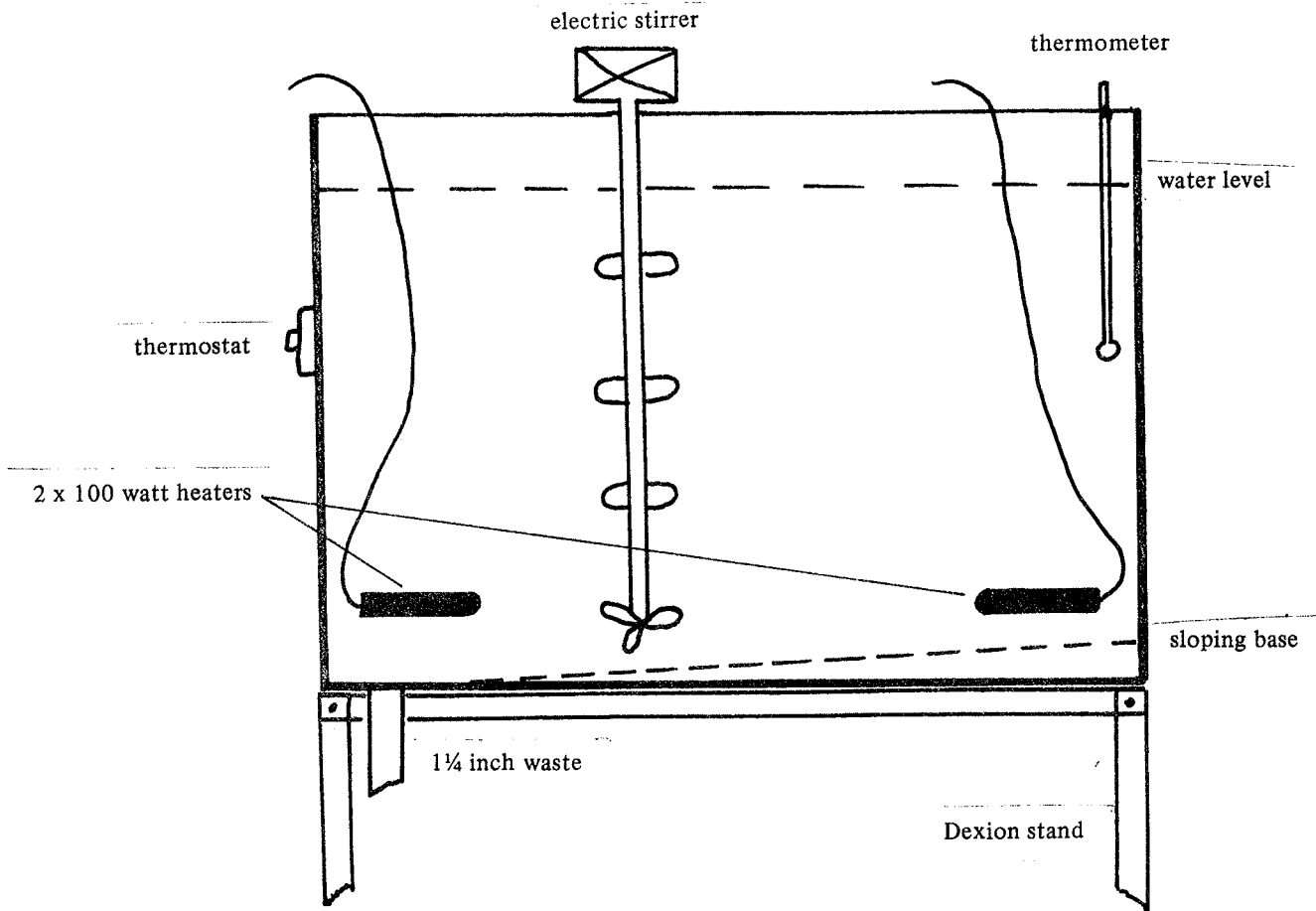
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stainless steel tank 21 x 18 x 17 (inches) deep



PREPARING ARTHROPOD SKELETONS

The use of enzyme baths and general rotting are a well known way of producing vertebrate skeletons. I have just received a reprint describing a sophistication for invertebrates:- Darteville, Marlier & Marlier (1980) 'Mise en évidence de l'anatomie externe des arthropodes par digestion bactérienne des organes internes' Annales Soc. r. Zool. Belg., 109 (1979); 29 - 30.

The skeletons of insects and small crustacea were cleared of flesh in about a week by use of a strain of Bacillus subtilis which had a particularly strong activity on protein substrates. The technique was found preferable to maceration with caustic potash if delicate parts were required for examination because of the considerable distortion the latter treatment normally produces.

Of course, having prepared your skeleton, you then have the task of deciding its ultimate fate - cabinet-skin or a mount!

Ian Wallace, Merseyside County Museums, Liverpool