A CHILDHOOD spent on the family's citrus orchards in Gayndah and Mundubbera started Australia's foremost glow-worm expert Claire Baker's interest in insects.

Now based at Atherton where she is establishing a glow-worm cave for tourism, the 32-year-old was a finalist in the peer-judged division and popular choice category of the annual Australian Eureka Museum Prizes.

Dr Baker leads a busy, fascinating life which has included acting as scientific adviser for two BBC documentaries, during which she worked with Sir David Attenborough on “Life In The Undergrowth”, a caves episode. She is consultant for her own creation, Cedar Creek's artificial glow-worm cave, and has discovered and described five new species of glow-worm as well as a new species of parasitoid wasp attacking north Queensland's glow-worms.

Dr Baker lectures at Queensland University on Australian insects, glow-worms, frogs, lizards and snakes, is a part-time presenter for Bugs Ed and has made guest appearances on television shows such as Totally Wild, Toasted TV and Scope. She also conducts international students on field trips and was in Hervey Bay at the weekend on a flying visit to see her parents, Rod and Marg Baker, on her way to the most recent of these.

Dr Baker went to primary school in Gayndah and Mundubbera before studying at Fairholme College and, later, at Queensland University where she earned her doctorate in entomology.

Glow-worms, the subject of her thesis and her particular specialty, have taken her into the field of "cold luminescence" with its potential use in medical science and improved lighting systems and as a tourist attraction.