

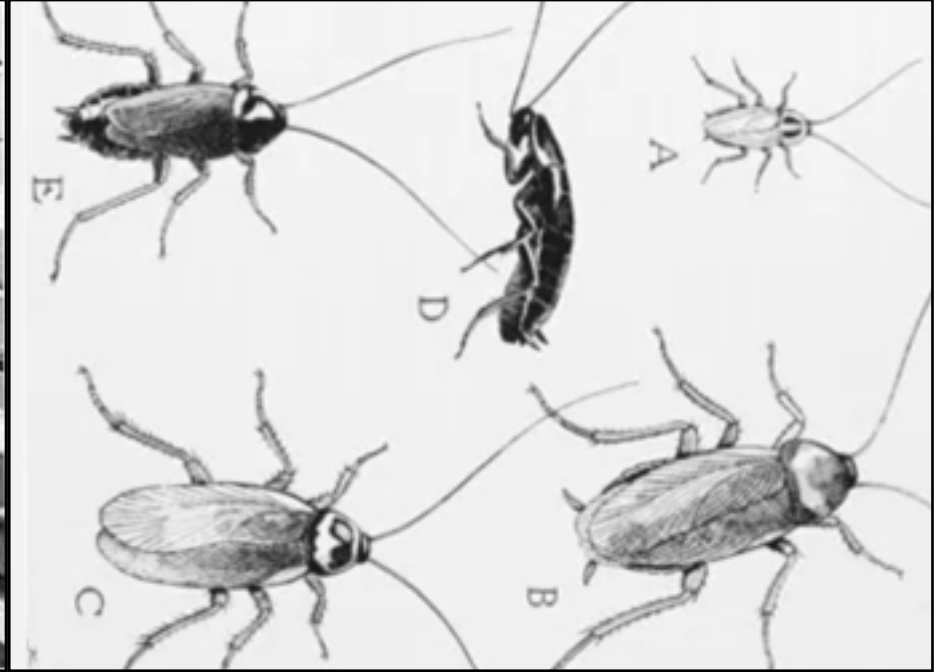
BERTA SCHARRER

(1906 - 1995)

Subject: Cockroaches

Field: Neuroendocrinology **Nationality:** German

Entomologist
of the
Month



Berta Scharrer co-founded the discipline of neuroendocrinology, which is the study of how the brain regulates the production of hormones in the body. Her research focused on the hormones released from the brains of cockroaches (pictured) and other insects. During her career, Berta described the structure and function of insect neurosecretory cells, which secrete brain hormones essential in directing the coordination and control of almost all insect bodily functions. Her invertebrate-focused research, in combination with her husband's research in vertebrate neuroendocrinology, disproved previous beliefs that the nervous system communicated only using electric signals. Despite the groundbreaking nature of her work, Berta conducted her research without an academic title or salary for the first 25 years of her career. Berta received her first salaried professorship in 1955 at Albert Einstein College of Medicine (New York), but even then at reduced pay when compared to her peers. Later in her career, Berta received numerous accolades for her research, including the National Medal of Science in 1983.

References:

- Purpura, Dominick P. (1998). "Berta V. Scharrer, 1906–1995". Biographical Memoirs. Washington, D.C.: National Academies Press.
- Wasserman, Elga R. (2000). "The door in the dream : conversations with eminent women in science". Joseph Henry Press. p. 36-37.
- This factsheet was produced by Katie Barie, a Penn State Insect Biodiversity Center graduate student

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