

Nutrition, Digestion, Excretion

- Nutritional Ecology
 - Essential nutrients
- The Digestive System
- The Excretory System

What nutrients are essential for insects?

- Water
- Energy
- Essential amino acids
- Essential lipids
- Vitamins & growth factors
- Minerals

Water

- This is the ultimate challenge for many terrestrial insects.
 - Drinking or moisture in food.
 - Oxidative metabolism.
 - Absorption of water vapor.



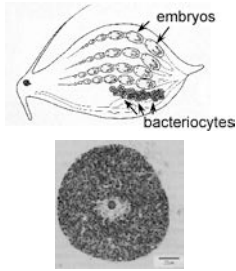
Energy

- Oxidation of carbohydrates, fats, organic acids, suitable amino acids.
- Each are variably available to different types of insects.
- Requirements can be quite high: Certain insect flight muscles convert more energy per unit weight than any other animal tissue.



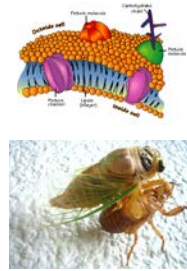
Essential Amino Acids

- Insects need at least the same 10 amino acids in their diet as we do.
 - Predators have little problem with this.
 - Phytophagous insects more of a problem.
 - Particularly sap-suckers.



Essential Lipids

- Insects are unable to synthesize polyunsaturated fatty acids
 - Involved in formation of phospholipids of cell membranes.
- Also **sterols** (unlike mammals).
 - Required for many hormones.
 - Derived from cholesterol (animal food) or β -sitosterol (plant food)



Vitamins and Growth factors

- Vitamin Bs particularly important.
- Vertebrate blood is particularly low in these (which insects care?)
- How do they get it?



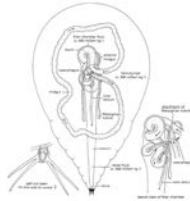
Minerals

- Requirements essentially the same across animal kingdom (e.g. we cannot synthesize them).



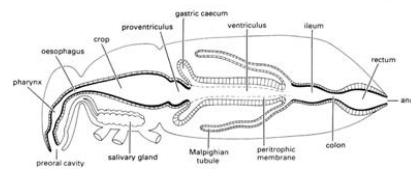
The Insect Gut

- The insect's digestive system & excretory system will reflect the diet in much the same way that mouthparts do.



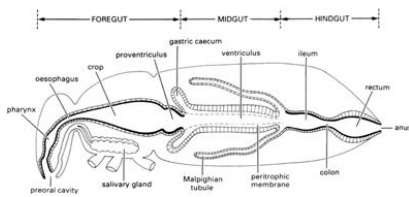
Gross Gut Morphology

- Foregut: Processing and storage of food.
- Midgut: Digestion and absorption of food.
- Hindgut: Absorption of water, salts, elimination of wastes.



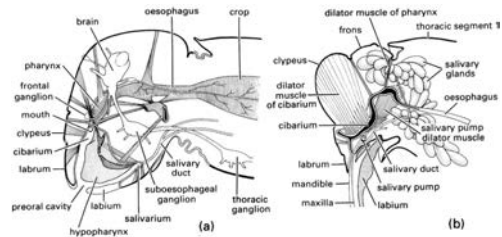
Gross Gut Morphology

- Note that the foregut and the hindgut are lined with cuticle (derived from ectoderm).
- Midgut** is not, instead lined with **peritrophic membrane** (derived from endoderm).



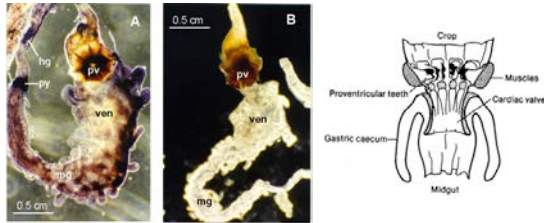
Foregut

- Mouth and oral cavity: consumption of food.
 - Ventral glandular salivarium
 - Dorsal muscular cibarium



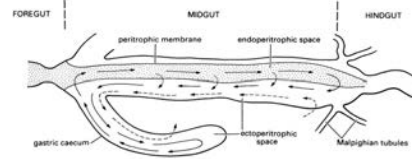
Foregut

- Mechanical processing of food in pharynx and proventriculus (gizzard).
- Storage in crop.



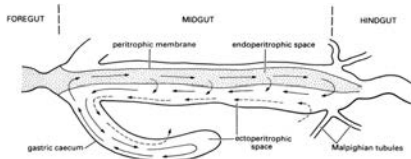
Midgut

- Most digestion of food occurs here.
- Two main areas:
 - **Gastric caeca** often house endosymbionts.
 - **Ventriculus** where most digestion occurs.



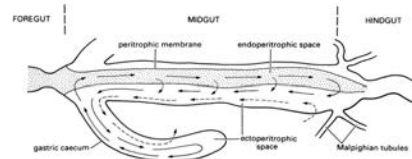
Peritrophic membrane

- Secreted by microvillate columnar epithelial cells.
- Made up of an amorphous sheet of polysaccharide, chitin, glycoprotein, and protein.
- Tubular film that surrounds the bolus and within which considerable digestion occurs.
- **Why would insects do this?**



Peritrophic membrane

- Protects against abrasion (re: no chitin).
- Serves as mucus (e.g. polysaccharides).
- Forms a barrier against **diseases**, plant **secondary metabolites** (e.g. tannins).
- Lined with pores that are selectively permeable: control movement of food out and enzymes in.



Peritrophic membrane

- Numerous insect pathogens center activity on peritrophic membrane.
- Including **Bt**: genetically derived insecticide from *Bacillus thuringiensis*.



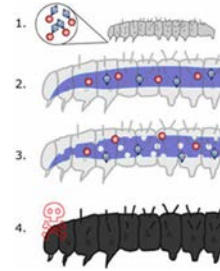
A 12-day-old cotton bollworm larva raised on a diet containing Bt proteins. Source: USDA



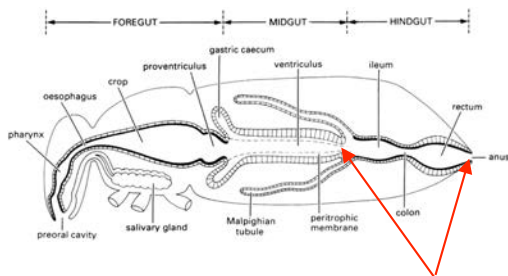
A 12-day-old cotton bollworm larva raised on a diet with no Bt. Source: USDA

Peritrophic membrane

- Insect eats *Bt* crystals and spores. Enzymes are activated by proteolytic enzymes in the insect gut.
- The toxin binds to specific receptors in the gut and the insect stops eating.
- The crystals cause pores to open in the peritrophic membrane, allowing spores and normal gut bacteria to enter the body.
- The insect dies as spores and gut bacteria proliferate in the body.



Hindgut & Malpighian Tubules: Water conservation and excretion.



Hindgut & Malpighian Tubules: Water conservation and excretion.

- Intimately involved in **osmoregulation** and elimination of wastes (especially nitrogenous).
- Re: insects have open circulatory system, therefore, no kidney or nephridia.
- Aquatic insects also have chloride cells to actively pump in ions.

Malpighian Tubules

- Outgrowth of hindgut, ectodermal in origin.
- Dead end tips open into hemolymph
- Transport epithelium secretes nitrogenous wastes and solutes **into** tubules: the **filtrate**.
- Water follows, how?
- These are delivered to the hindgut.

The Hindgut

- Parts of rectal epithelium are thickened to form **rectal pads**.
- These are specialized for absorption of water from feces before defecation.
- Active transport of ions across these cells sets up osmotic gradient, water is reabsorbed.
- How are nitrogenous wastes excreted?

Cryptonephridia

- Some desert insects have intimate association between Malpighian tubules and hindgut.
- Bounded by **perinephric** membrane.
- Allows extreme conservation of water, including absorption of water from humid air in the rectum.

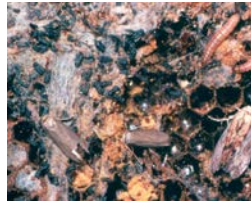
Some unusual diets...

- Insects can digest some abundant, yet resistant compounds.
- Some moths and beetles can feed on keratin.
 - Requires enzyme, low oxygen environment to reduce sulfur bonds, and reducing agent.

Clothes moths (Tineidae) are also known to scavenge horn, hooves, and even tortoise shells.

Some unusual diets...

- Beeswax is ordinarily resistant to digestion.
- But wax moths can eat it: have a highly **basic** gut.



Wax moths (Pyralidae) are considered a pest by beekeepers

Some unusual diets...

- Wood regularly consumed by some wood-boring beetles, termites, wood-feeding roaches, and silverfish.
 - Some endogenous production of cellulases (wood-roaches, termites).
 - Most endosymbiotic interactions with bacteria or fungi.
 - Some exogenous consumption of fungi to obtain cellulases.

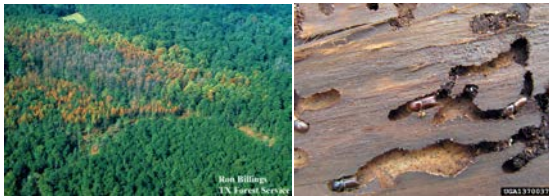


Termites and wood-roaches are the only insects known to convincingly produce their own cellulolytic enzymes



Asian longhorn beetle house an endosymbiotic fungus that produces cellulolytic enzymes

Bark Beetle Infestations



Some unusual diets...

- Wood regularly consumed by some wood-boring beetles, termites, wood-feeding roaches, and silverfish.
- Some endogenous production of cellulases (wood-roaches, termites).
- Most endosymbiotic interactions with bacteria or fungi.
- Some exogenous consumption of fungi to obtain cellulases.
- Some only consume rare starch, sugar, or whole cell walls in wood tissue, not lignin itself.



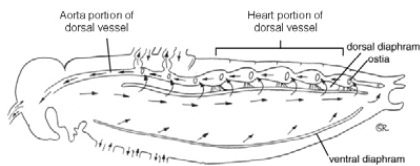
Termites and wood-roaches are the only insects known to convincingly produce their own cellulolytic enzymes



Asian longhorn beetle house an endosymbiotic fungus that produces cellulolytic enzymes

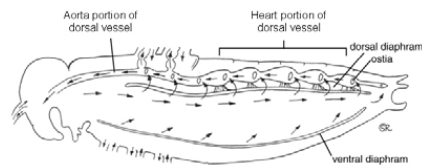
The Insect Circulatory System

- Insects have an “open” circulatory system.
 - The **hemocoel** (body cavity) is filled with **hemolymph** (blood) that bathes the organs.
- Does this mean that blood does not circulate?



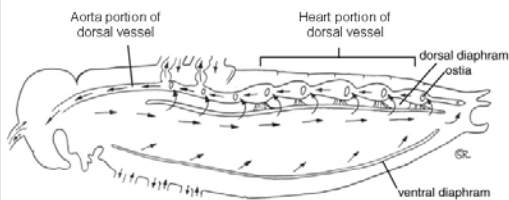
Insect Circulatory Organs

- Multichambered ‘heart’ = dorsal blood vessel
 - Chambers vary across lineages: cockroaches have 13, house flies have 3.
 - Each chamber has a pair of **ostia**: inlet valves that draw hemolymph into the heart.



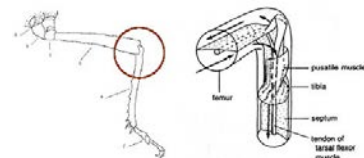
Insect Circulatory Organs

- Dorsal diaphragm** is a horizontal membrane in the abdomen that separates hemocoel into two regions
 - Above is the pericardial sinus: hemolymph enters the heart.
 - Blood pumped anteriorly via peristaltic action to the head.
 - Below is abdominal hemocoel, blood flows posteriorly there.



Insect Circulatory Organs

- The leg muscles need to eat, too.
- Are divided by a septum.
- Insects have local **pulsatile** organs at the bases of appendages that pump hemolymph.



Hemolymph

- Largely a colorless liquid that bathes tissues
 - (separated from cells by basement membrane; what purpose does this serve?)
 - Makes up 15-30% of total body weight and 15-70% of total body volume.
- More than nine cell types, all **nucleate: hemocytes**
- Function of many still unknown.
- Most common are **plasmatocytes**: phagocytic on bacteria and other foreign microorganisms.



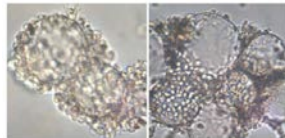
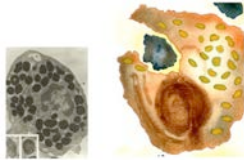
Functions of the hemolymph

- Transport of nutrients, wastes, hormones.
- Water storage
- Lubrication of internal organs
- Heat exchange
- Hydraulics



Functions of the hemolymph

- Immune reaction
- Phagocytosis
 - Plasmatocytes phagocytose bacteria, other foreign particles.
- Immunity proteins
 - Still poorly understood
- Encapsulation
 - Lamellocytes encase parasitic wasp eggs that bind to the surface of cells and cannot be phagocytosed



Functions of the hemolymph

- Clots and wound repair.
 - Less risk of bleeding because of weak blood pressure.
 - Coagulocytes and prohemocytes seal wound.

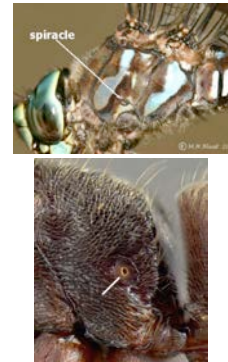
The insect respiratory system

- How do insects get oxygen to tissues?
- Hemolymph does not bind oxygen (with some exceptions).
- Respiration is via direct ventilation of tissues via **tracheal system**.



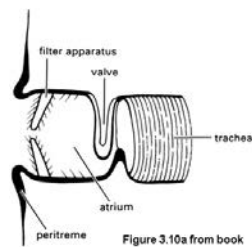
Spiracles

- External openings
- Hypothetically one per segment;
- Normally occur on meso-, metathorax, and abdominal segments 1-8 (none in head, prothorax or genital segments)



Spiracles

- Have a chamber or pit = **atrium**.
- Protected by **valve** which can be opened or closed.
- What do these do?
- These lead to tracheae



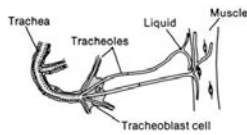
Trachea

- Series of air-filled tubes; unique to insects
- Entirely separate from the circulatory system.
- Lined with cuticle
- Extensively branched
 - 39% of body volume of the June beetle
- **Taenidia**: spiral cuticular thickening running through trachea
 - Prevent tubes from collapsing under reduced pressure.



- **Tracheoles:** smallest diameter tubes.
 - <1 micron in diameter
 - No cell in an insect is more than 1 cell away from a tracheole.
 - In flight muscles where O₂ consumption is high, tracheoles extend *between* muscle fibers.
 - Tips of tracheoles are fluid-filled at rest, but air-filled during activity (for maximum gas diffusion)
 - In the 5th instar silkworm, each spiracle gives rise to 103,000 tracheoles (~1.5 million altogether).

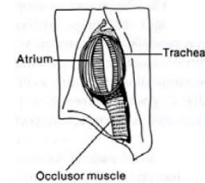
Tracheoles



Ventilation in Insects

Two types: passive and active

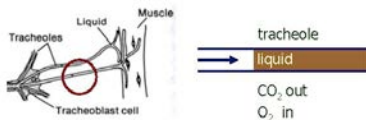
- Occlusor muscle influenced by CO₂ level
- Spiracle opens and air comes in.
- Air passes through atrium.



Ventilation in Insects

Two types: passive and active

- Air passes trachea, reaches tracheoles.
- Air exchange in tracheole.
- Muscle takes O₂.



Ventilation in Insects

Two types: passive and active

- Only type of ventilation in smaller insects.
- Based on simple diffusion, not active pumping.
- Continuous O₂ uptake and CO₂ storage causes 'suction'.
- CO₂ is expelled in cyclical bursts--every 20 min. in termites, every 6 hr in moth pupae.
- In between CO₂ is stored in the hemolymph as bicarbonate.
- This creates negative pressure and air is sucked into the trachea.
- When CO₂ concentration in the trachea >6.5%, spiracles relax and CO₂ is expelled.

Ventilation in Insects

Two types: passive and active

- Large insects must physically move air in and out of the tracheal system.
- Close forward spiracles and force air out of rear ones via blood pressure, muscle contraction.
- Creates negative pressure (vacuum) up front when rear spiracles closed.



Figure 2.11b from Book

Ventilation in Insects

Two types: passive and active

- Tracheal air sacs (flying insects) can increase tidal flow and reduce density of the insect.



Figure 2.11b from Book

Arrangements of the Spiracles

(modifications)

- Mosquito larvae: only abdominal segment 9 spiracle functional.
- No spiracles:
 - mayfly, damselfly nymphs use abdominal 'tracheal gills'
 - Dragonfly uses gills in a modified hindgut.



Adaptations in other aquatic insects

- Giant water bugs (Belostomatidae) and water scorpions (Nepidae): breathe through a pair of 'siphons' at the posterior end of the abdomen.
- Diving beetles (Dytiscidae): trap an air bubble between the elytra and the abdominal terga: spiracles have moved (evolutionarily) to the dorsal surface of the abdomen.
- Waterboatmen (Corixidae): hairs on the abdomen hold a thin, continuous air bubble in place, giving the abdomen a silvery appearance.



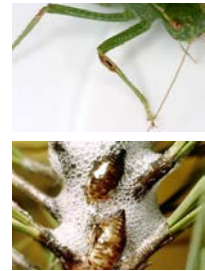
Atracheate insects

- All gas exchange takes place through the integument.
- Examples are Collembola (springtails) and some parasitic hymenopterous larvae.



Additional functions of the tracheal system

- Suspend internal organs (especially during movement).
- Air pressure needed for ecdysis.
- Thermoregulation--insulating layer of trachea around flight muscles.
- Pathway for development of nervous system.
- Weight reduction--hollow structures.
- Sound perception--tympanum is modified from tracheal system.
- Defense--spittlebug froth, defensive secretions from some grasshoppers & moths.

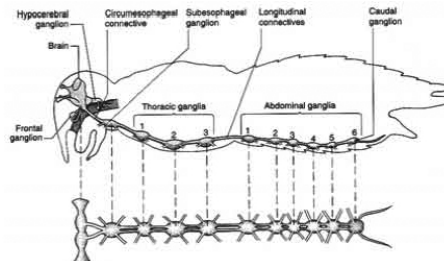


Nervous System Organization

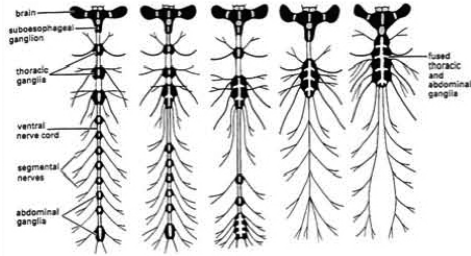
Three Major Regions

1. Central Nervous System (CNS)
 - Chain of ganglia
 - Brain

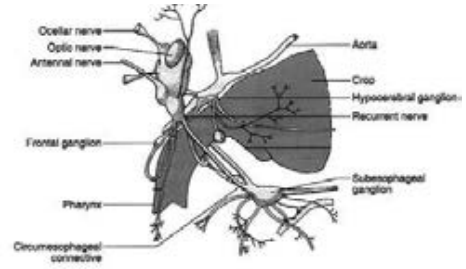
Insect Nervous System



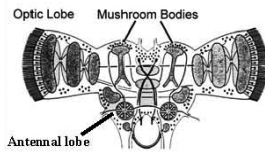
Insect Nervous System



Insect Nervous System



The Brain



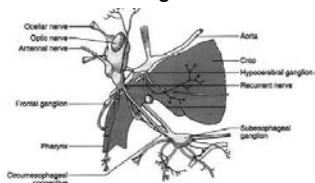
- Protocerebrum
 - Optic lobes
 - Ocellar lobes
 - Mushroom bodies
- Deutocerebrum
 - Antennal lobes
- Tritocerebrum
 - Connections to frontal & subesophageal ganglia

Nervous System Organization

Three Major Regions

1. Central Nervous System (CNS)
 - Chain of ganglia
 - Brain
2. Visceral Nervous System (VNS)
 - Stomatogastric (stomodeal)

Stomatogastric nervous system = 'mouth & gut'



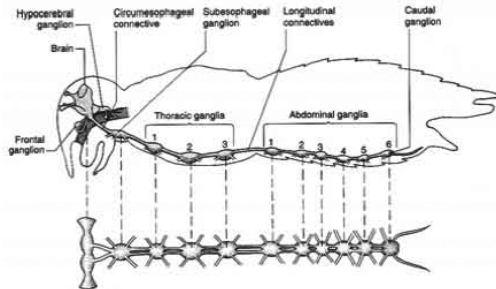
- Frontal ganglion
 - Hypocerebral ganglion
 - Corpora allata
 - Corpora cardiaca
- | Endocrine Organs

Nervous System Organization

Three Major Regions

1. Central Nervous System (CNS)
 - Chain of ganglia
 - Brain
2. Visceral Nervous System (VNS)
 - Stomatogastric (stomodeal)
 - Ventral visceral
 - Caudal visceral

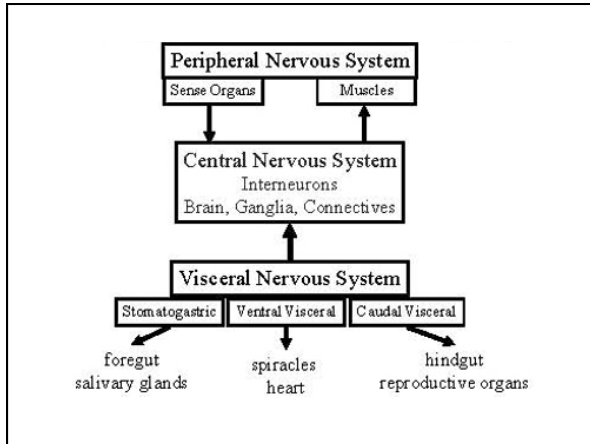
Nervous System Organization



Nervous System Organization

Three Major Regions

1. Central Nervous System (CNS)
 - Chain of ganglia
 - Brain
2. Visceral Nervous System (VNS)
 - Stomatogastric (stomodeal)
 - Ventral visceral
 - Caudal visceral
3. Peripheral Nervous System (PNS)

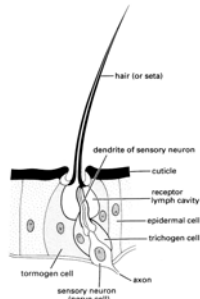


Insect senses

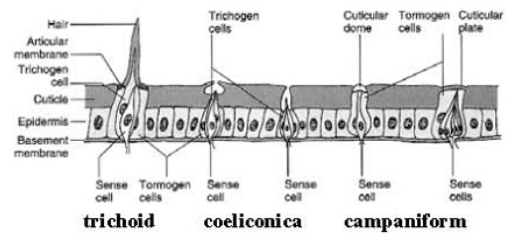
- Mechanoreception
 - Tactile
 - Proprioception
 - Auditory
- Chemoreception
 - Olfaction
 - Gustation
- Photoreception

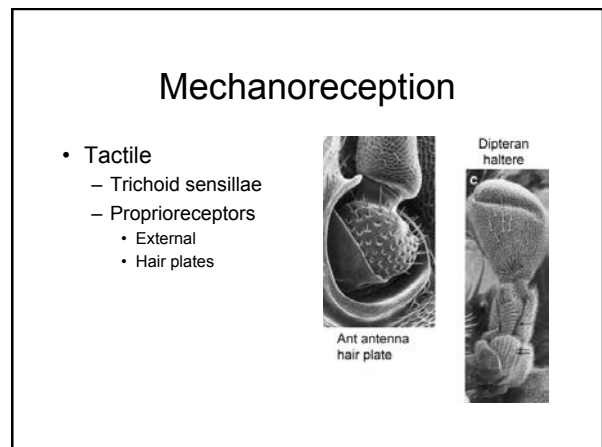
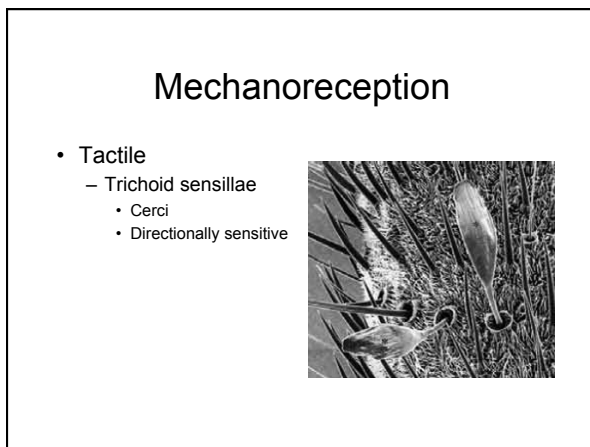
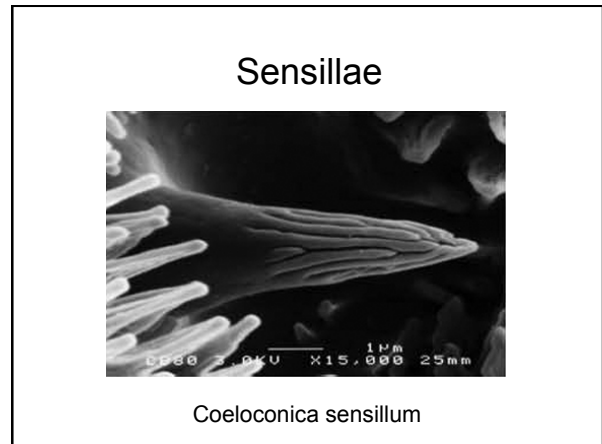
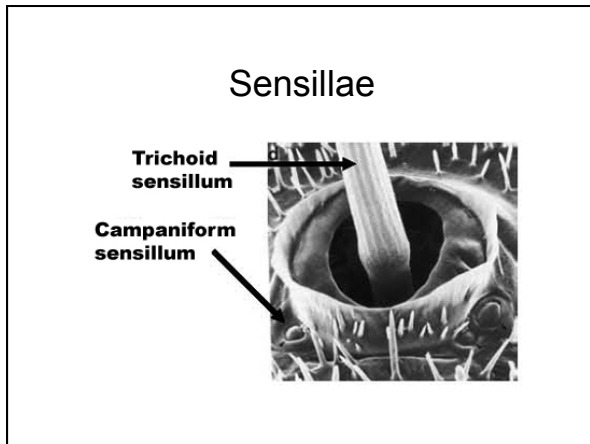
Sense Organs

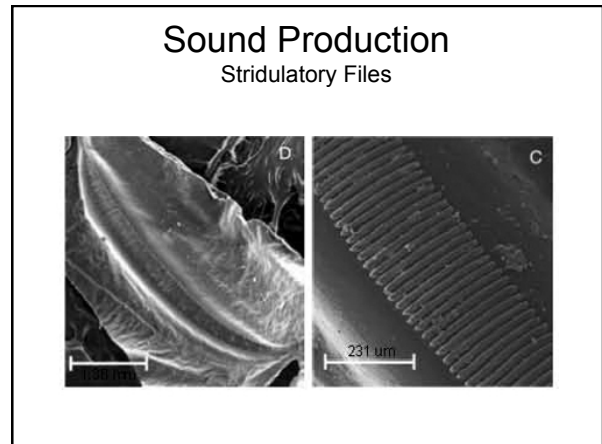
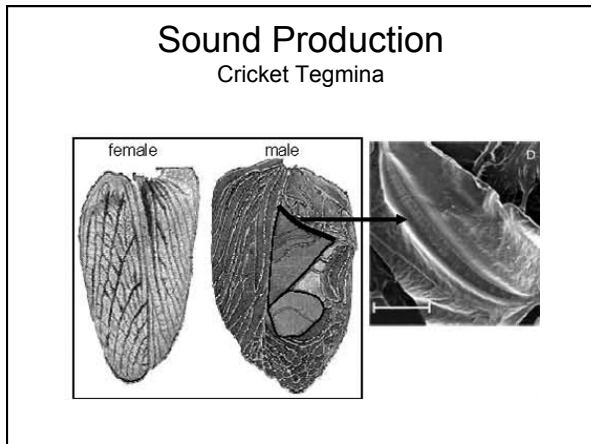
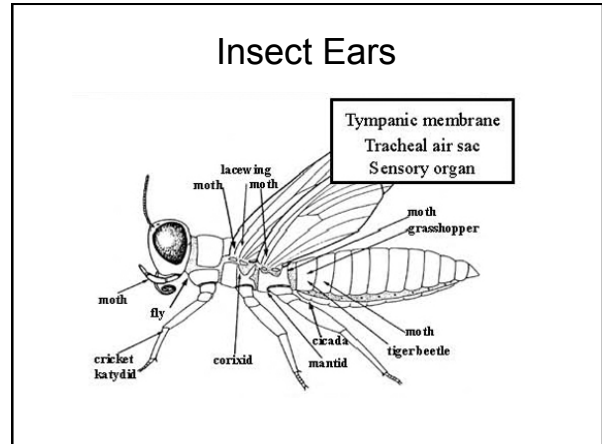
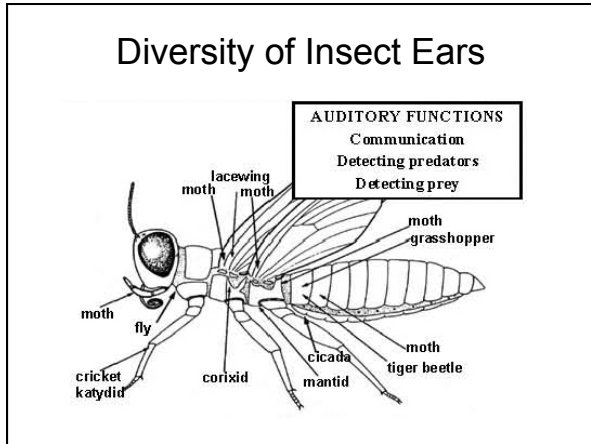
- External Sense Organs
 - Derived from setae
 - Trichogen cell
 - Tomogen cell
 - Sensory neurons (bipolar)
 - Classified based on shape
 - Trichoid sensillae (hair-like)
 - Coeloconica sensillae (cone in pits)
 - Campaniform sensillae (plate)



Sensillae



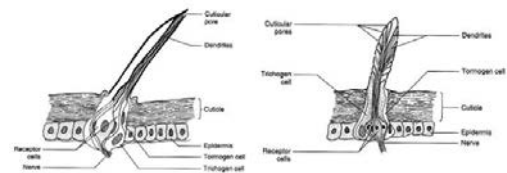




Chemoreception

- Olfaction (distance chemoreception)
 - Gaseous
 - Low concentrations
 - High specificity
- Gustation (contact chemoreception)
 - Liquid
 - High concentrations
 - Low specificity

Chemoreceptors



Chemoreceptors



Chemoreceptors

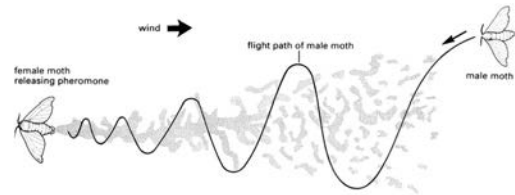


Semiochemicals

- Intraspecific communication
- Pheromones
 - Exocrine glands-- secrete externally
 - Sex pheromones

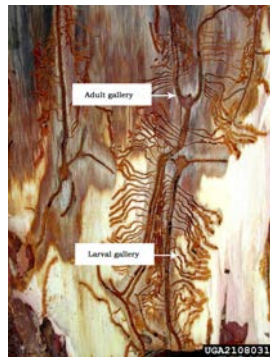


Semiochemicals



Semiochemicals

- Also...
 - Aggregation pheromones
 - Spacing pheromones



Semiochemicals

- Also...
 - Aggregation pheromones
 - Spacing pheromones
 - Trail marking
 - Alarm pheromones



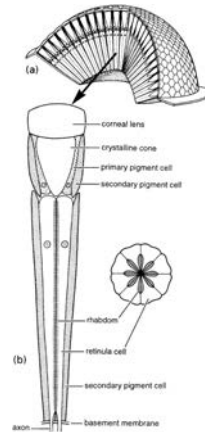
Photoreception

- Many insects have photoreceptive cells throughout their body.
- Most photoreception occurs in the **compound eyes** and **ocelli**.



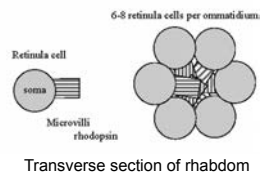
Compound Eyes

- Composed of 10 to 20,000 ommatidia.
- Two portions:
 - Dioptic apparatus
 - Lens & Cone
 - Focus light
 - Receptor apparatus
 - Rhabdom
 - Retinula cell & microvilli
 - Converts light energy into neural signal



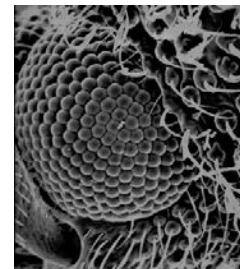
The Rhabdom

- The Receptor Apparatus.
- Light is focused by diotic apparatus to rhabdom.
- 6-10 retinula cells per ommatidium.
- Microvilli with visual pigments excited by different wavelengths.



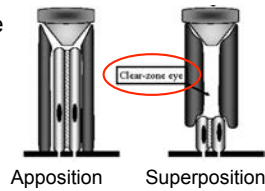
The Apposition Eye

- In normal **apposition eyes**, each cluster of retinula cells is surrounded by pigment.
- Therefore insect vision is composed of many, many apposed facets.
- Is there a problem with having a very, very small diameter of lens?



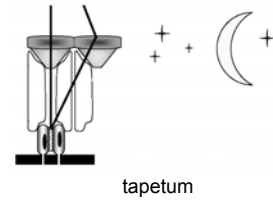
The Superposition Eye

- Insects that fly in low-light have an adaptation called the **superposition eye**.
- Clear zone separates dioptric apparatus from receptor apparatus.
- Why?



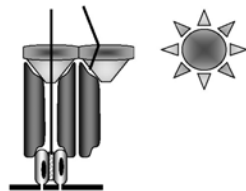
The Superposition Eye

- In low-light, pigment migrates towards lens.
- Receptor apparatus is no longer limited to light from single dioptric apparatus.
- In addition, modified tracheae form **tapetum** at base of retinula.
- What is sacrificed here?



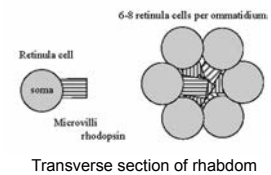
The Superposition Eye

- Can undergo physiological adaptation (NOTE, THIS IS NOT EVOLUTIONARY ADAPTATION).
- Pigment migrates back into pigment cells, rhabdom only receives light from its lens.



Visual pigments

- Colors seen by insects are determined by the visual pigments embedded in the microvilli of a retinula cell.
- Can be sensitive to very different wavelengths.
- What is stimulated controls what the insect perceives.



Visual pigments

- Humans can see visible light from 380-750 nm.
- Insects range from 310-730 nm.
- Upper end (red) limited to butterflies.
- Most insects can see into the ultraviolet.



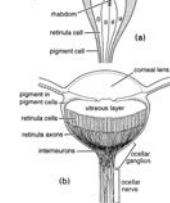
Then there's the nefarious

- Kurup *et al.* 2013. Fluorescent prey traps in carnivorous plants. *Plant Botany* (Online Early View Version).
- When UV light is blocked out, these become less effective in trapping insects.



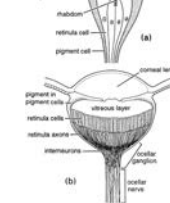
Dorsal Ocelli

- “Simple Eyes”
- Single lens.
- Many, many photoreceptors.
- Is this good at image forming?
- Or light reception?



Dorsal Ocelli

- What are these likely used for?



Photoproduction

- Bioluminescence
- **Luciferase** oxidizes **luciferin** in the presence of ATP and oxygen.
- Most prominent in Lampyridae: Lightning Beetles.



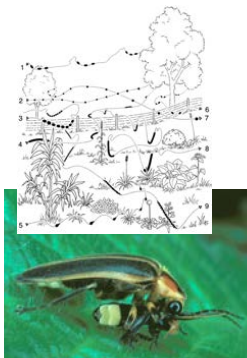
Photoproduction

- Likely originated as aposematic trait.
 - Warning coloration.
- Exapted into species specific signalling.



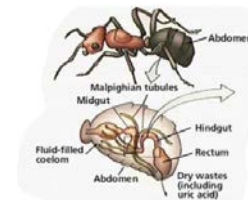
Information is Information...

- *Photinus* fireflies do their species-specific signaling.
- *Photuris* female fireflies mimic *Photinus* female receptive signals.
- What happens when the *Photinus* male thinks he's got it?



Where are insect muscles?

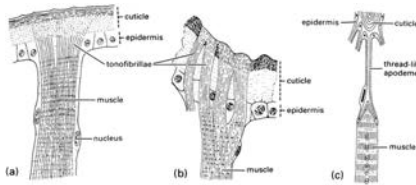
- Skeletal muscles
 - Attached to exoskeleton.
- Visceral muscles
 - Attached to intestines in alimentary canal.



Where are insect muscles?

Muscle attachment

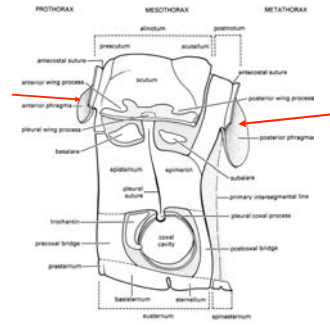
- Attach via **tonofibrillae**
 - Permit fusion of mesoderm (muscle) and ectoderm (cuticle)
- Apodemes & apophyses.
 - Internal ridges; anchors for muscle attachment



Where are insect muscles?

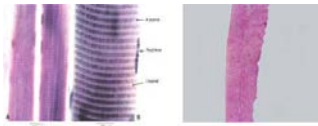
Muscle attachment

- Attach via **tonofibrillae**
 - Permit fusion of mesoderm (muscle) and ectoderm (cuticle)
- Apodemes & apophyses.
 - Internal ridges; anchors for muscle attachment
- Phragma
 - Plate-like invagination; flight muscle attachment.

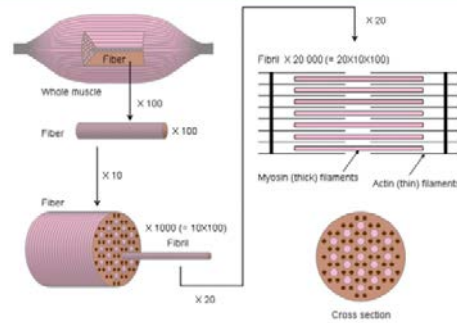


Insect vs. human muscular system

- Types of muscles
- What types are present in humans?
- Only one type of these is present in insects.



Insect Muscle

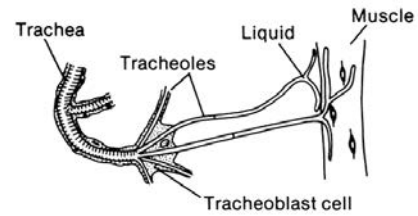


Types of Insect Muscles

- **Synchronous muscle**
 - Synchronized with neural impulse
 - One contraction and relaxation per 1 neural impulse.
- **Asynchronous muscle**
 - More than 1 contraction and relaxation per 1 neural impulse.
 - When might this be useful?

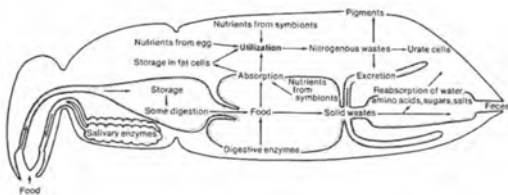
Oxygen and energy source

- How can insect muscles get oxygen?



Oxygen and energy source

- How can insect muscles get energy?



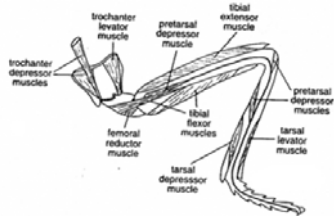
Insect Locomotion

- Why do insects have six legs?



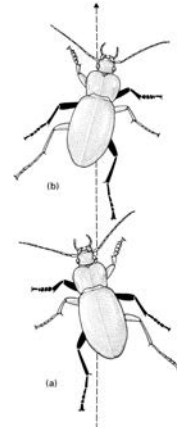
Insect Locomotion

- Muscles for insect locomotion
 - Levator vs. depressor muscles.
 - Flexor vs extensor muscles.



Insect Locomotion

- Generally, always three legs on the ground (how do they grip the ground?).
- What other non-flying means of locomotion do we see?



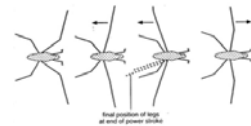
Jumping

- Generally, accomplished by storing energy through compression of resilin.
- Release of compression yields instantaneous spring.
- [Sometimes, compression is stored in other locations...](#)



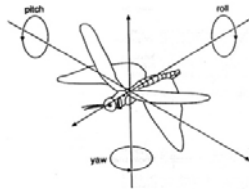
Sliding

- Water striders have hydrofuge cuticles or hair fringes
- Move by rowing with hair fringed legs.



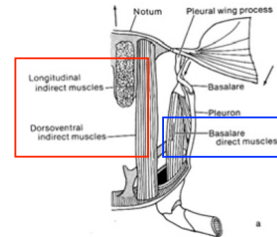
Insect Flight Mechanism

- Wings not true appendages, extensions of **exoskeleton**
- No appendages given over to flight (compare to other winged animals)
- Powered flight is only found in **adult** insects.
- Air ahead must be thrown downward and backward, giving **lift** and **thrust**.
- Modifications in left versus right permit turning.



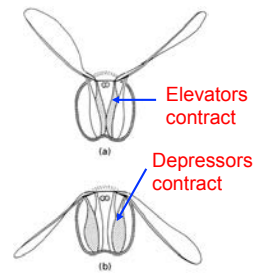
Insect Flight Muscles

- Two types:
 - **Direct muscles**
 - Only type found in **Paleoptera**
 - **Indirect muscles**
 - Found in **Neoptera**
- **Neoptera** have both...



Direct flight

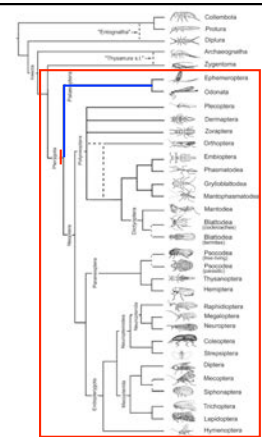
- Muscles directly attached to wings
- Very fine control
- One nerve impulse = one muscle contraction = one wing beat (what kind of muscles are these?)
- Ancestral form, found in **Paleoptera**: Dragonflies & Mayflies



Insect Evolution

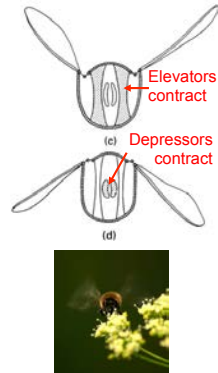
Wings & Flight
Pterygota

Ancestral:
Direct Flight
Paleoptera

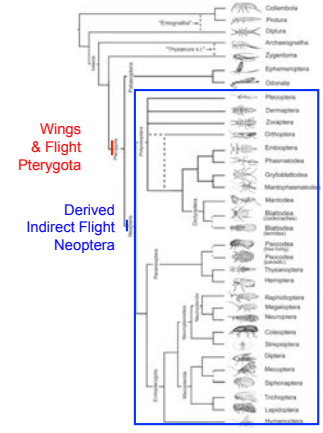


Indirect flight

- Flight muscles attached to interior of thorax (NOT directly to wings)
- Energy is conserved because the elasticity of the thorax restores its shape
- Single nerve impulse required to initiate muscle contraction, single impulse to cease (what kind of muscles are these?)
 - Reduces number of nerve impulses to muscle contractions immensely.
 - Results in much more rapid wing beats (up to 1,000 times per second in some gnats)
- Derived form found in **Neoptera**

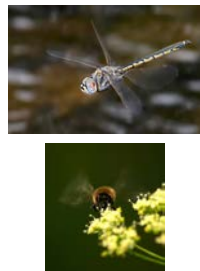


Insect Evolution



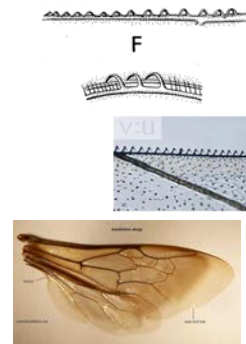
General trend in insect flight

- **Harmonization of wing beat.**
- Direct to indirect an obvious transition.
 - Direct can move *each wing* individually.
 - Sides are coordinated by contortion of thorax.
 - Permits evolution of asynchronous muscles.



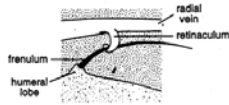
General trend in insect flight

- **Harmonization of wing beat.**
- Carried further in other insects.
- Fore and hindwings coupled.
 - Hamuli lock forewing and hindwing together in Hymenoptera



General trend in insect flight

- **Harmonization of wing beat.**
- Carried further in other insects.
- Fore and hindwings coupled.
 - Frenula lock them together in Lepidoptera.
 - Similar structures found in Orthoptera, Hemiptera.



General trend in insect flight

- **Harmonization of wing beat.**
- OR, powered flight eliminated in one pair of wings.
- **Sclerotized forewings:**
- **Elytra** of Coleoptera
- **Tegmina** of Orthoptera & Dermaptera



General trend in insect flight

- **Harmonization of wing beat.**
- OR, powered flight eliminated in one pair of wings.
- **Sclerotized forewings:**
- **Elytra** of Coleoptera
- **Tegmina** of Orthoptera & Dermaptera
- **Wing reduction**
- **Halteres** of Diptera
- **Halteres** of Strepsiptera

