

# Nature Notes

Junior Ranger

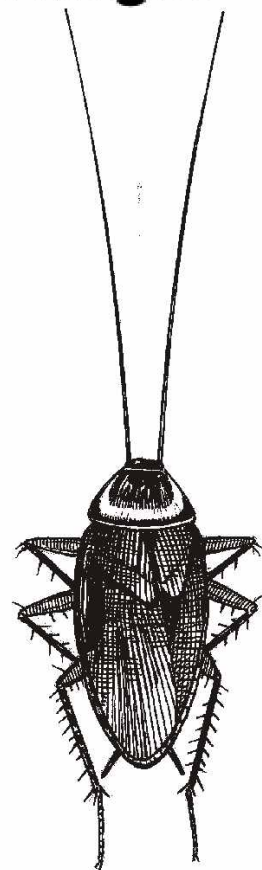
## COCKROACHES

Ever wondered why cockroaches are so hard to catch when you chase them with a shoe? The answer is in the tail.

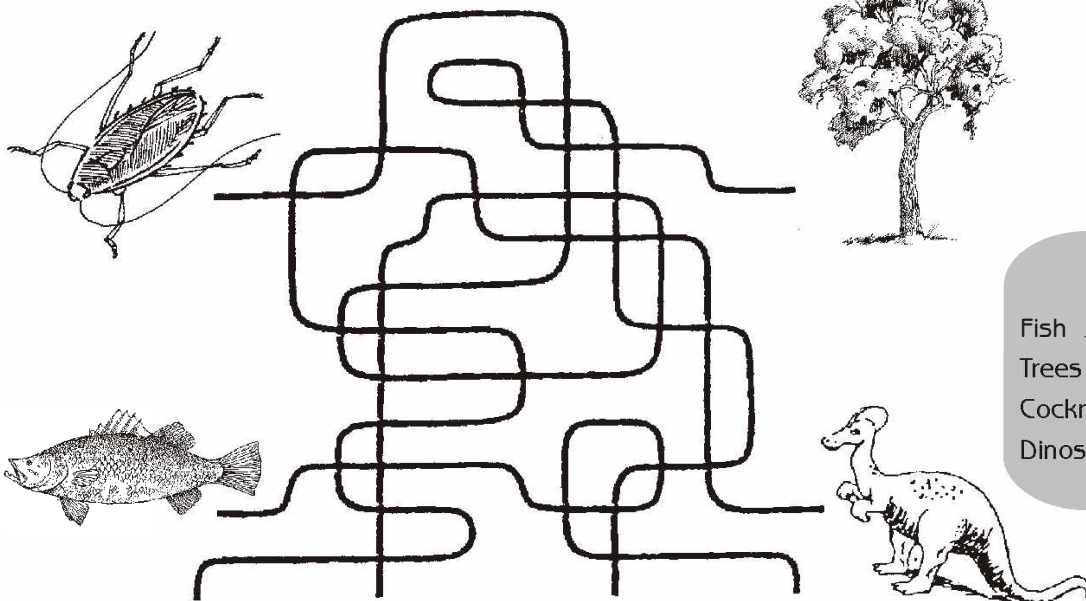
Next time you have a close encounter with a cockroach in your kitchen, notice its two little tails. They're actually a pair of feelers, covered with minute hairs. These amazingly sensitive hairs can detect the slightest air movement. This is why cockroaches are so hard to catch. As you move around a room you disturb the air. The cockies feel you coming and are off as quick as a flash.

The hated household cockroach is one of nature's greatest survivors. This unpopular scavenger is the world's most ancient living insect. They belong to a group of insects (Order) that scientists call *Blattodea*.

Follow the tangled lines to work out how long cockroaches have been around.



American Cockroach  
*Periplaneta americana*



### ANSWERS

Fish \_\_\_\_\_ million yrs  
Trees \_\_\_\_\_ million yrs  
Cockroaches \_\_\_\_\_ million yrs  
Dinosaurs \_\_\_\_\_ million yrs

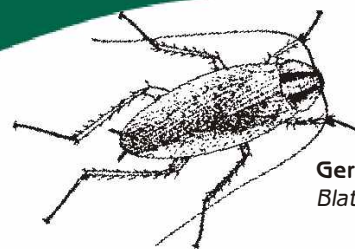
225  
million  
years

320  
million  
years

400  
million  
years

500  
million  
years

## PESKY PESTS



German Cockroach  
*Blattella germanica*

The cockroaches we chase around our kitchen are feral animals. As people have migrated around the world, these cockies have travelled with them. Of all the cockroach species (types) in Australia only 9 are the introduced one's that we all love to hate! The big (up to 4cm) red-brown one you see at night in your kitchen is most likely the American cockroach. Another common unwanted household guest is the German cockroach. It is much smaller (1.5cm), amber in colour with two stripes running down its back. This one is a real pest, as the female can lay lots of eggs in her short 6 months of life. In fact, scientists suggest that a single female German Cockroach could give rise to more than 100,000 cockroaches in your home by the end of one year!

Decode the following number puzzle to work out where these feral animals originally came from.

1=A	5=E	9=I	13=M	17=Q	21=U	25=Y
2=B	6=F	10=J	14=N	18=R	22=V	26=Z
3=C	7=G	11=K	15=O	19=S	23=W	
4=D	8=H	12=L	16=P	20=T	24=X	

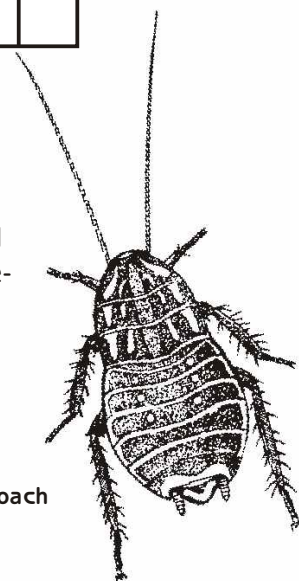
20 18 15 16 9 3 1 12

1 6 18 9 3 1

## NICE NATIVES

Australia has about 400 species of bush cockroaches which aren't pests. They live in leaf litter, under rocks or in moist, rotting logs. They eat dead leaves and are a natural recycling agent. The feral cockroaches have given them a bad name. These nice, true-blue Aussies don't go into people's houses.

The native cockroaches are often quite attractive and colourful. Many people mistake them for beetles.



Bush Cockroach

Decode the following words to reveal another difference between the natives and the ferals.

1 21 19 20 18 1 12 9 1 14

14 1 20 9 22 5 19

8 1 22 5

14 15

23 9 14 7 19

## DID YOU KNOW...

Queensland is home to one of the world's largest cockroaches, the Giant Rhinoceros Cockroach. It measures a whopping 7cm long and can weigh up to 30g. But you may not ever see it as it lives mostly underground.

Want to learn more about cockroaches?

Check out the book *Australian Insects - A Natural History* by Bert Brunet.

