

LEONILA VÁZQUEZ GARCÍA

(1914 - 1995)

Subject: Entomology
Fields: Ecology/ Taxonomy
Nationality: Mexican

ENTOMOLOGIST of the MONTH



Photos via Wikimedia Commons; the zebra longwing pictured on right (*Heliconius charithonia vazquezae*) is named after Vázquez.

Vázquez could be considered the “Mother of Mexican Butterflies,” for her descriptions and study of endemic moths and butterflies; this was just one of many contributions she made to Mexican entomology. Born in the city of Jimenez, in the northern state of Chihuahua, Vázquez studied at the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM), where she would become a distinguished researcher for over 50 years. She wrote the first inclusion of butterflies for the Encyclopedia of Mexico, published over 50 scientific papers, and mentored over 1800 students. Vázquez collaborated with the Mexican government to help protect overwintering monarch butterfly populations. She collaborated with the Instituto Indigenista (Indigenous Institute) on a study of the traditional cultivation of the cochineal scale insect used to create the red dye carmine, a resource of colonial economic importance. Finally, Vázquez’s work was significant in advancing Mexican entomology; she was a founding member of the Mexican Society of Entomology, an awardee of the Society’s Entomological Merit medal, and has 39 plant and arthropod species named in her honor.

References:

- Thompson, M., and Martin, J. 2022-03-24. “The Mothers of Entomological History: Reflecting on Who We Honor and How We Do It.” Entomology Today.
- Zaragoza Caballero, S., Beutelspacher Baigts, C.R. (2009-05-10). “Doctora Leonila Vázquez García. In memoriam”. Anales del Instituto de Biología serie Zoología. 66 (1). ISSN 0368-8720
- This factsheet was produced by Lilly Germeroth, a Penn State Ecology graduate student

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