

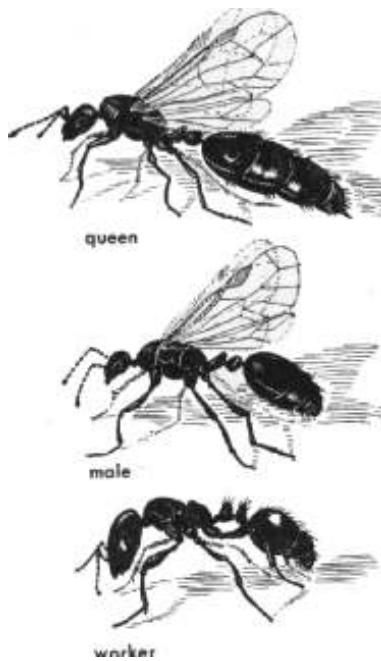
CREATURES OF THE CREATOR

Part Two: The Ant

We step on them. We run from them. Most people don't like them much. They ruin our picnics and scurry around our houses. Ants are the most numerous animal on the planet. In fact, the combined weight of every ant in the world is greater than the combined weight of all humans.

The Species

Worldwide, there over 10,000 species of ants. Around 100 of these live in Michigan. An ant's size ranges from extremely small (1 mm) to very large, for an ant, at 30 mm. The ant has six legs and is related to the bee and the wasp.



Ants live in *colonies* which can be found nearly anywhere. The queen ant begins a colony by laying eggs. Most of her offspring are females. Depending on the food supply the young females receive, they will either turn into workers or queens. The worker ants are unable to reproduce. They take care of the colony by feeding the others and building the nest. The males who are hatched eventually fly away from the nest in search of other queen ants. They die soon after mating.

Interesting Ants

- Ants are found everywhere except Antarctica, Iceland, Greenland, and a few isolated islands.
- Queen ants can live for several years. Worker ants generally live a few months.
- The workers have many jobs to keep the nest functioning, including: tending the young, expanding the nest, collecting food, disposing of waste, and protecting the nest from predators and parasites.
- If a nest is attacked, the workers release “alarm” chemicals that bring other workers to the rescue.
- Depending on the species, the ant eats a variety of food. Some like sugary “nectar”, while others eat “pest” insects like flies, bits of meat, or seeds. Leaf-cutter ants take pieces of leaves back to the nest and eat the fungus that grows on them.
- Some ant species can sting, and all of them can bite. They will vigorously defend their nests. Many ants have chemicals they can spray on their enemies.
- In the 1930s, the Red Fire Ant was accidentally brought from South America to the United States. They are aggressive ants with a painful sting. Our country spends approximately 5



Imported Red Fire Ant

billion dollars per year on medical treatment, damage, and control in areas infested by the Fire Ant.

- Ants are known for their teamwork. An ant can carry 10 to 20 times its body weight. In order to move a heavy object, many ants will work together to bring it to the nest.

- Jerdon's Jumping Ant is so named because its back and middle legs move together giving it the ability to leap.



Jerdon's Jumping Ant

Ants In the Bible

Ants always appear to be working very hard (and they are). The workers tend the young, defend the nest, bring food back to share with others, and design and enlarge the nest, among other things.

It is with this in mind that the Scriptures mention the ant in several places.

Proverbs 6:6-9 Go to the ant, you sluggard; consider its ways and be wise! It has no commander, no overseer or ruler, yet it stores its provisions in summer and gathers its food at harvest. How long will you lie there, you sluggard? When will you get up from your sleep?

Solomon points to the ant as an illustration of a hard worker. It is not good for us to be “sluggards” (habitually inactive or lazy people), but we ought to

make use of the gifts our God has given us. He has given us minds that can think, therefore we think. He has given us hands which can work, therefore we work.

Proverbs 30:24-25 Four things on earth are small, yet they are extremely wise: Ants are creatures of little strength, yet they store up their food in the summer.

Those who have studied ants in the wild have noted that they are very intelligent insects. The Bible agrees, counting ants among four creatures that are small but very wise. They store up food for themselves so they have it later when food is difficult to find.

The Proverb reminds us to be wise as well; to use the minds the Lord has given us to plan, prepare, and make the best decisions we can as we go through life.

Working For the Great Worker

We work, of course, because of Him who worked for us. We Christians put our minds and hands to good use in order to thank our Lord Jesus for coming to earth on our behalf to suffer, die, and rise again. 1 Corinthians 10:31, “So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.”

Resources

<http://www.biokids.umich.edu/critters/Formicidae/>
<http://www.aphis.usda.gov/lpa/pubs/invasive/fireant.jpg>
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ant>
<http://home.att.net/~B-P.TRUSCIO/STRANGER.htm>
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Red_imported_fire_ant