

The amazing world of ants

By Science Friday, adapted by Newsela staff on 04.22.20

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A green tree ant clinging to a twig upside down. Photo from: Auscape/UIG via Getty Images.

Ants are super-strong. Some ants can carry 5,000 times their body weight. That is like one ant carrying 5,000 of his friends! That is amazing.

That is not all. Ants can do many other incredible things.

Tall Towers

Fire ants can build towers with their bodies. They climb up on each other. They make a tower kind of like cheerleaders. The ants don't do it for fun. They only make towers when they need to. They can use ant towers to escape from boxes or containers.

Floating Rafts

Some ants can also build rafts. These ants live in Brazil. This is a country in South America. The ants' homes get flooded when it rains. When the water rises, the ants cling together. They make rafts with their bodies.

Some ants build bridges, too. Army ants are famous for this. These ants live in South America.

Strong Bridges

When a line of these ants come to a gap, they slow down. The ants behind them pile up. They do not get stuck, though. Instead, they walk over each other. In this way they form a bridge. That lets the other ants keep walking.

Why do they do this? It has to do with where they live. Army ants live in the rain forest. The forest floor is messy. Rocks and streams block the way. The ants must get past them. They need to get where they are going. Building bridges is one way to cross.



Cooling Off

Saharan silver ants live in the desert. These ants have a coat of silver hairs. The hairs keep them cool. This is important in the desert heat. The sand there can get scorching hot.

How does this cooling system work? Dark colors get hotter in sunlight. Silver hair does not. It bounces the heat away. That keeps the ants nice and cool.

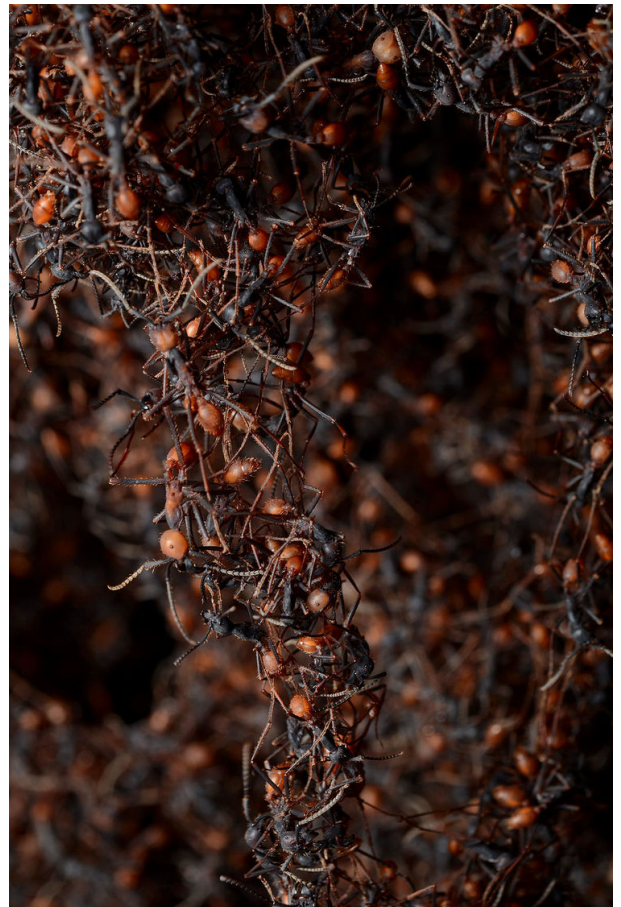
Getting Lost

Longhorn crazy ants walk in crazy patterns. But they still work well



together. They team up to carry big loads. There is just one problem. The ants often get lost. They may wander away from the nest.

First, the ants sense they're going the wrong way. Then they find an ant that knows the way home. In time, that ant also gets lost. Then another ant takes over as leader. It guides the group for a while. Finally, the ants make it home.



Quiz

- 1 How do Longhorn crazy ants find their way home?
- (A) They build bridges to cross objects.
 - (B) They choose an ant to be the leader.
 - (C) They talk with scents and touch.
 - (D) They walk randomly in many directions.
- 2 Where would you find ants that can build rafts?
- (A) the United States
 - (B) inside boxes
 - (C) the desert
 - (D) Brazil
- 3 What is the article MAINLY about?
- (A) different things ants do
 - (B) ants building rafts
 - (C) ants following each other
 - (D) ants escaping from boxes
- 4 What is the section "Cooling Off In Desert Heat" MAINLY about?
- (A) ants crossing bodies of water
 - (B) ants losing their way when traveling
 - (C) why desert ants have silver hairs
 - (D) ants getting out of boxes

Answer Key

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