

Who Invited Ants to Our Picnic?

An exploration into the life of ants.

Genre: Food and Drink, Life, Nature



Ants will invade our picnics wherever we go, except in the icy-cold regions of the world.

Picnics are a wonderful chance to get outside, enjoy some fresh air and nature with good friends and family, and eat some yummy food. Much like going to the beach.



Picnicking is a fun and enjoyable way to spend time with friends and family outdoors.



But sometimes while we are nestled on our picnic rug, unwanted guests show up, like a snooping bird or a colony of ants. We can send the bird on its merry way, but ants don't speak our language.

Some scientists say there are one million ants for every human being there is on Earth! No wonder that a few pop up when we're about to eat our lunch...



It is very common for ants to crawl their way to the food we lay down on our picnic rugs.

Working with others is what makes ants extraordinary. Smart cookies do not call ants social, but "eusocial," which means no other species is better at living and working together (other than maybe bees or termites). They live together in colonies where every ant has a place and a job.

The Incredible Ant Work Ethic

Ant colonies are made up of different types of ants, mostly females, who are either queens, workers, soldiers or other specialists (like window washers (total lie)). The males are called "drones."



Drone Ant

And if you think you're a hard worker, check out the ant! Typical worker ants sleep less than five hours a day. Eighty percent of all workers are always active, which tells us how ants achieve so much despite being so small.



Ants live in colonies and each of them have a role to play in helping the colony thrive.

And achieve they do: some ant nests stretch up to ten feet underground, and others grow over five feet tall!

When you hear someone say that you need to "work as hard as an ant", you know what they mean. The ultimate workhorse is not a horse, but rather an ant.



Ants can be only millimeters in length and some can be up to three centimeters in length.



Their ability to work together makes them special in the animal kingdom, but it is their bent antennae, their teensy little waist, and the blimpy butt that really sets them apart from other insects.

More Ant Facts

Ants like to live anywhere and are found everywhere except Antarctica and other distant islands.

Despite being tiny, ants are very powerful! Some ants can lift up to one hundred times their body weight. If you were as strong as an ant you might be able to lift up your father (depending on how round he is).



Ants can lift up to one hundred times their body weight, making them the strongest insects in the animal kingdom.

Looking for food, lady forager ants can travel up to 300 feet. They need to supply food for the whole colony – millions of other ants – so they are always alert. They sniff out food easily, which explains how they find their way to our cupboards, and, sadly, to our picnics.

The next time you go on a picnic, keep your picnic basket off the ground and your yum-yums either packed away or on the way to your tummy. As you eat your lunch, take a moment to watch an ant or eighty doing their very best for their ant-pals.

 **Good to Think About**



1. What types of different ants are there?


2. Where do they like to live the most?

3. How are ants different from other insects?

4. Why do ants invade our picnics?

Key Vocabulary

- picnic
- guest
- extraordinary
- colony
- Queen
- worker
- soldier
- specialist
- kingdom
- antennae



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