

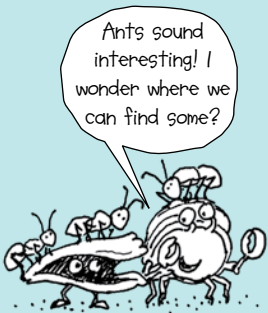


ANTS

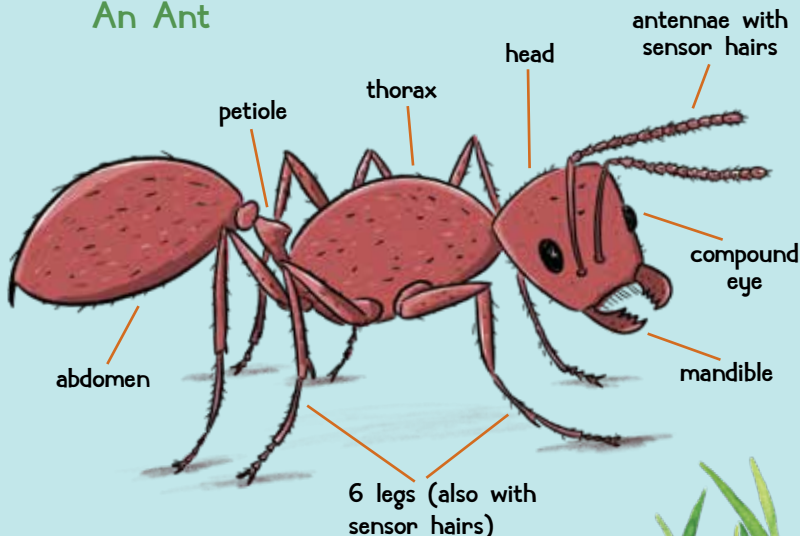
Hi there! I'm Anne Ant. Let me show you my world!

I'm sure you've seen ants running around the sidewalk, disappearing into mysterious holes. Ever wonder what we do down there?

First, let me introduce myself. Ants are not all the same, you know! There's more than 16,000 different ant species. Ants live everywhere except Antarctica (so I don't know why they call it that!). There are desert ants, forest ants, tropical ants, tree ants, even ants that live in nuts. How many ants are there on Earth? WAY more than people. A million billion! It's the planet of the ants!



An Ant



My House

I'm a harvester ant. We collect seeds. Under this mound is our nest. We built it all ourselves! There's so many tunnels, it's like a whole city. But we never get lost.

How do we know what to build? I don't know! We sense when to make a tunnel, or add a chamber. It just kind of feels right. But there's no master plan. It just happens!

This room is the store-room. Full of tasty seeds! Ants are very neat. Some of my sisters are arranging the seeds. They put long thin ones on the bottom and round ones on top, so they don't roll around.

Below is the nursery, where we keep the eggs and larvae, our little sisters. My first job was here, babysitting. That was when I was just young, a whole couple of months ago.

So Many Sisters

Hi, Sis! and Sis! All these ants are my sisters. We all hatched out of eggs laid by our mom, the queen. Every ant

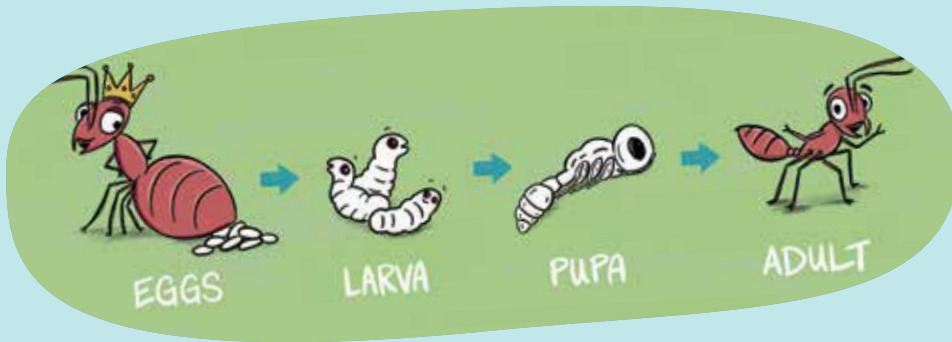
ALL AROUND

art by Laura Fisk

nest has one queen, and lots of workers who are her daughters. That's me! And her, and her, and her...

We don't get many brothers. But they have wings! It's true. Every year a few larvae hatch as winged males and new queens. The males and queens from all the nests fly up to mate. Then the males all die, so sad!





When there's not many seeds to find, we stay in and just laze around. No sense wearing yourself out.

Up, up, up, and past

the guard. Good day, sister! Keep the nest hole safe! Don't let in any strange ants! Oof, it looks like some sand fell in during the night. But that's a job for a cleaning ant. Today, I'm doing food.

So this is outside! How nice! The sun is warm, and it's not too dry. But where's the food? Must be down this trail, where the scout ants left a marker this morning. And what's that I smell, off to the right? Yes! Grass seed! Just lying here in the dirt. A whole big seed head! Jackpot! I'll use my big scissor jaws to just cut this seed off. Grasp firmly, and off I go.

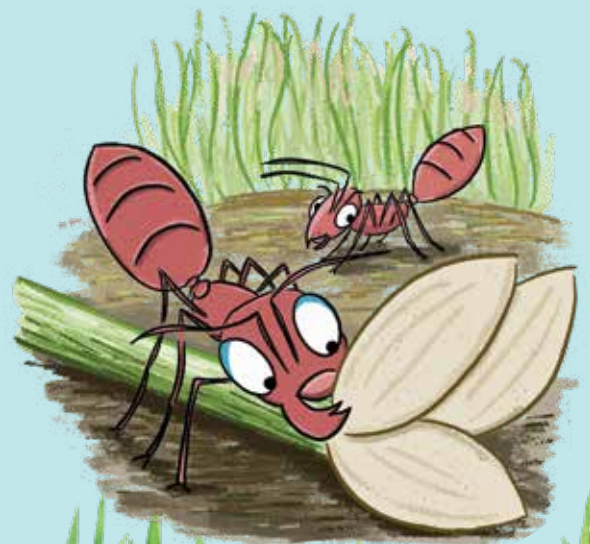
Hey, who are you? Sniff sniff. Tap my antenna... !!!! You're NOT MY SISTER! You have a strange smell!

The queens fly off to begin new colonies somewhere. When they find a place they like, they shed their wings and start digging. That's how this place got started!

Soon the queen has lots of daughters like me to help her. She doesn't tell us what to do, though. She just makes more ants.

Ants at Work

Look, you can see the sun coming into the top of the tunnel. Today is super exciting. I'm going to go outside the nest for the very first time! I wonder what's out there? I think it must be full of food. That's where all our seeds come from. I've met six ants today carrying seeds, so I'm going too! Yummy, yummy seeds.



Hey you strange ant, what are you doing by my grass stalk? I will tap her to shoo her away. Go! Back to your own patch!



Spread the News

Now, home to the nest! But wait—how will I find my way back to these seeds? Oh, right! Scent trails!

This is so cool, just watch.

As I walk along (with this tasty seed), I dip my rear to touch the dirt every few paces.

Dab, dab, dab. With each dab, I leave a tiny bit of ant perfume.

That makes a smell trail back to the seeds.

That's how ants talk, you know. With smells.

The best way, if you live in the dark.

Here's the nest hole. In goes the seed! Other ants will carry it down. I stay near the top now. That's the rule—once you're an outside ant, no going down in the deep tunnels again. That helps keep the inside clean.

I am so excited, I have to tell my sisters. I tap them with my antennae. Food! I found food!

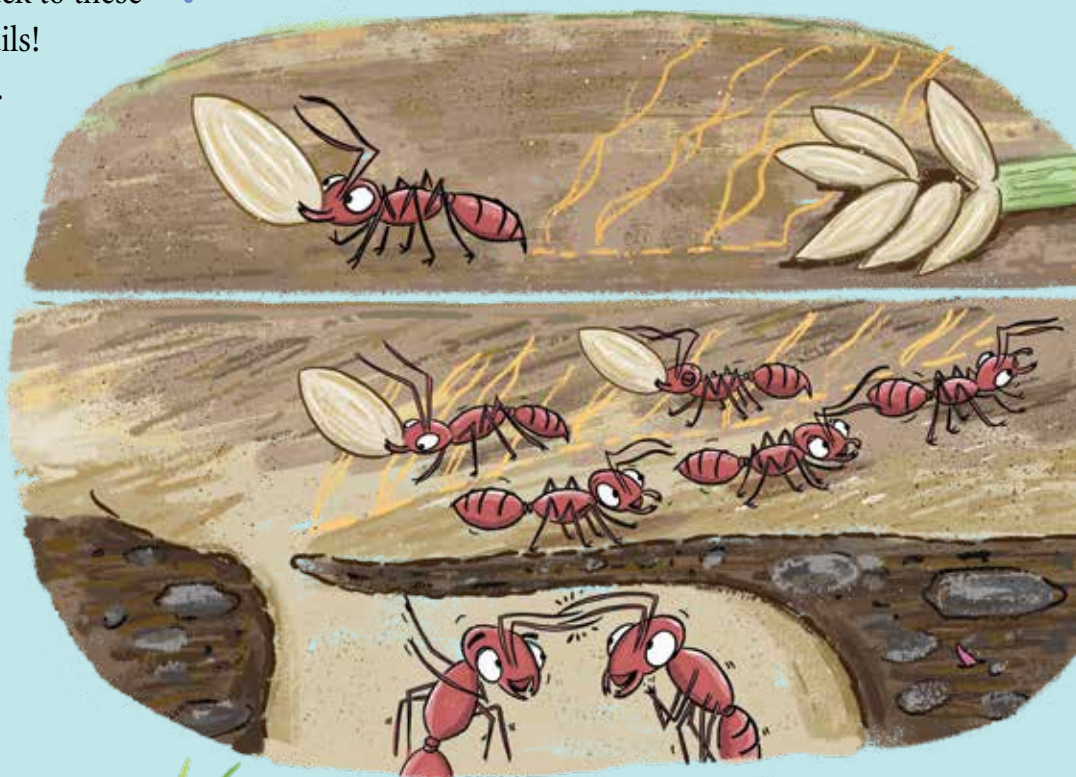
A few follow me outside and sniff my perfume trail.

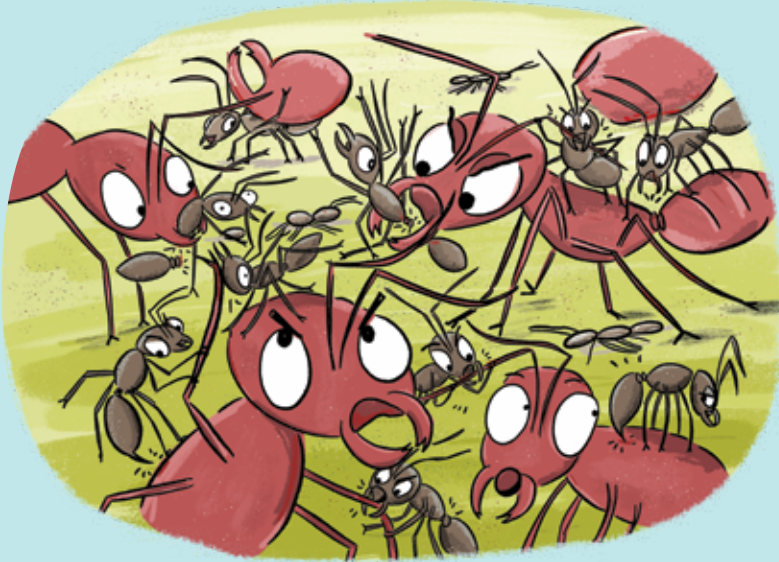
We all march back to the grass. Seeds for everyone!

My sisters leave scent trails too.

Soon even more ants come out, until the seeds are all collected.

You'll never go hungry if you just follow your nose.





War

I'm just getting ready to set out again, when I smell an ant signaling—danger! One of my sisters has been attacked! We're not big fighters, not like some other ants. We don't invade other nests or steal their larvae. But we will defend our food! Ready your stings! No one's getting OUR seeds, not if I can help it.

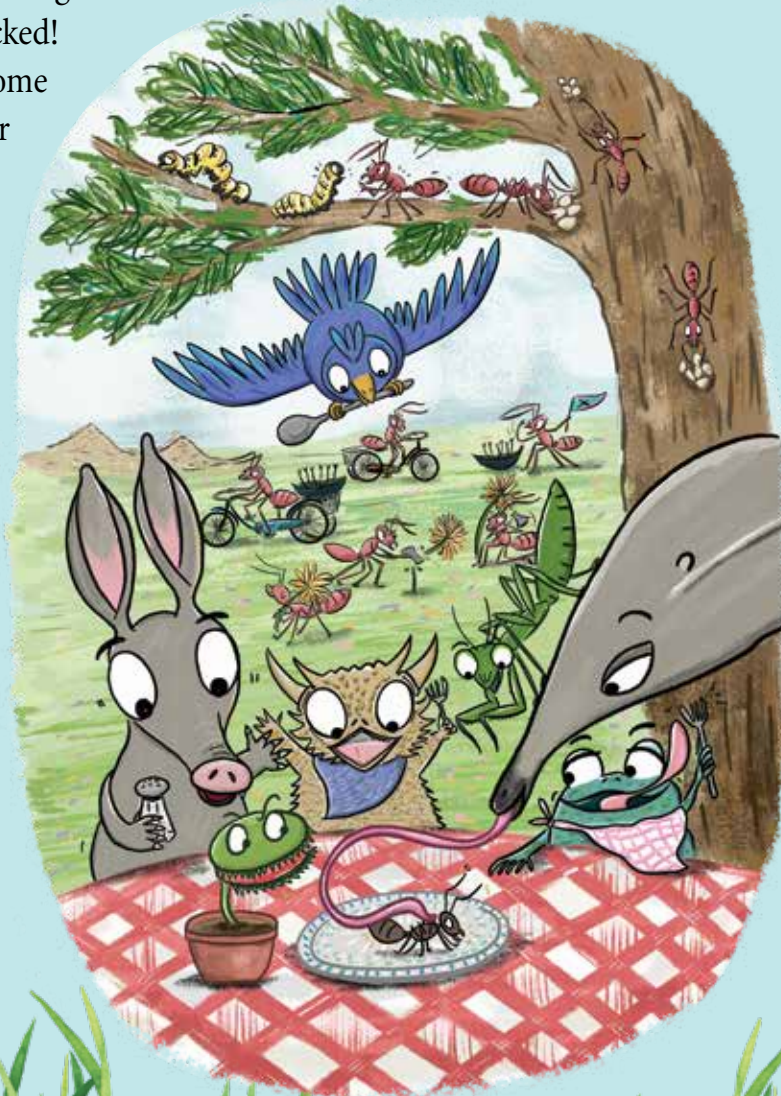
After a short battle, victory is ours! We lost some sisters, but the nest is safe.

Earth Loves Ants

Soon the day gets hot, and we rest in the cool tunnels. May no horned lizards find us! Inside, we share food with our sisters who didn't go out.

While we wait for the cool evening, why not take a moment to think about all the ways ants make the world a

- better place? We keep things clean by
- eating tons of dead leaves and critters.
- We help trees by chewing weeds and
- eating caterpillar eggs. Ants enrich the
- soil by stirring it around and digging
- tunnels that let in air and water. And
- so many birds and frogs and lizards
- and other animals like to eat us! Your
- world would look very different with-
- out all us billions of tiny invisible ants.
- So, you're welcome. It's all in a day's
- work for an ant. Thanks for visiting!
- And watch where you step! 🐜



A World of Ants

Pretty much anywhere you go on Earth, you will find some local ants. There are more than 16,000 different ant species. Each has developed its own special way of life. It takes all kinds to fill the world with ants!



Leafcutter ants

These forest ants cut up leaves to take back to their nest. They chew the leaves into a paste, which they use to grow fungus. Then they eat the fungus.



Fire ants

Sting! There are 280 different kinds of fire ants, and every one has a powerful sting. They use their stings to hunt other insects and defend their nests.



Phid-herding ants

Many kinds of ants like to eat honeydew, a sweet liquid pooped out by tiny plant-sucking bugs called aphids. Some ants herd the aphids together and milk them like cows.



Weaver ants

These ants use their babies to sew with! Weaver ants make nests out of leaves, held together with sticky silk spun by ant larvae. Adult ants will hold the larva up like a glue bottle to stick the sides of a leaf together.



Army ants

Army ants don't live in nests. They march along, eating everything in their path, even snakes! To cross streams, they make a bridge of their own bodies. They form a shelter out of living ants for the queen to lay eggs in.



Acacia ants

These African ants live in acacia trees. They hide out in big hollow thorns. The ants get a safe home and eat tree sap. In return, the ants protect the tree by cutting weeds and stinging animals that try to eat the leaves.



Trap-jaw ants

Look at that huge jaw! These ants have the fastest bite in the world. They use it to catch tiny springtails. They can also snap their jaws to fling themselves in the air for a quick escape.



Honeypot ants

Some honeypot ants eat until they swell up into round balls. Then they hang onto the ceiling of the nest. When another ant

needs food, it strokes one of the honeypots to get it to spit out some of its stash.

Not Ants!

These tricksters camouflage themselves as ants to hide from predators, or to sneak up on ants to eat them. But ants can smell a faker!



Mimic ant bug



Cricket nymph



Ant mimic spider



Bark mantis



Jumping spider