

# Nature Notes

Junior Ranger

## GREEN ANTS

Green Ants are common in the trees of northern Australia. This aggressive insect is one of nature's most skilful builders.



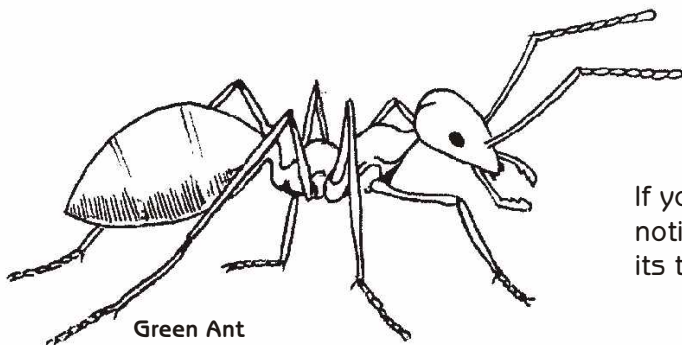
Bees, wasps and ants belong in a supergroup (Order) of insects that scientists call *Hymenoptera*. Ants can be sorted into 3 groups:

1. The biters;
2. The stingers;
3. The squitters.

The small black ants of Central Australia are **biters**. Each one can only manage an annoying pinch. But large numbers of them can drive you crazy.

The big Bulldog Ant and the feral Ginger Ants of the Top End are **stingers**. Like the canine they are named after, they get a firm grip on you with their sharp jaws. At the end of their tails is a sharp sting which they ram into you like a doctors needle.

Green Ants are **squitters**. They don't have a sting. Instead, a green ant grabs onto your skin with its six legs and bits a hole with its jaws. Then it pulls its tail underneath itself and squirts formic acid into the wound. It hangs on to the death, chewing on your skin to mix in the acid, like a baker mixing dough.



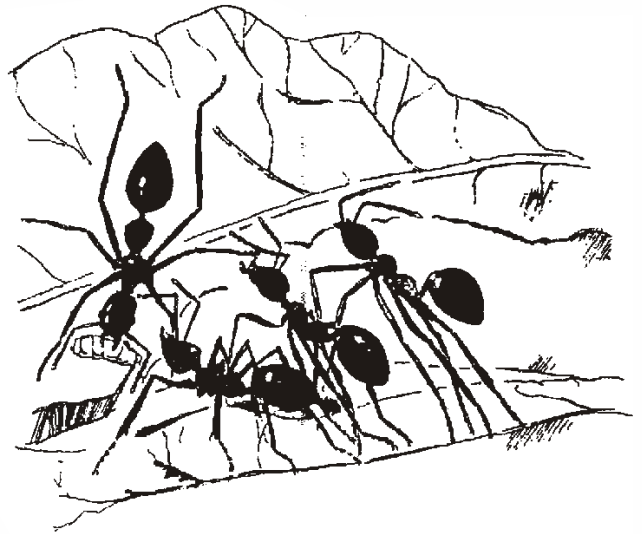
Green Ant  
*Oecophylla smaragdina*

If you study a green ant with a magnifying glass, you will notice its very slender waist. This allows it to easily bend its tail forwards and squirt acid into its unfortunate victim.

## NATURE'S AMAZING WEAVERS

Green ant nests are made of leaves pulled together and expertly stitched or woven with silk. Hence they are also sometimes called weaver ants. The nests sometimes are as big as a football. Inside are a number of rooms housing the queen, her babies and many workers. Some workers look after and wait on the queen. Some gather food. Others act as nursery maids, cleaners and builders.

When it is time to build a nest, the ants choose a clump of leaves on a tree. One ant will grab hold of the edge of a leaf. A second ant hangs onto the first one like a trapeze artist at the circus. Then a third ant swings from the legs of the second. By forming chains like this the ants are able to drag the leaves together.



Decode the following puzzle to find out how they stitch them.

Code: A=Z B=Y C=X D=W etc

A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z  
Z Y X W V U T S R Q P O N M L K J I H G F E D C B A

G S V

Z M G H

X Z I I B

G S V R I

Y Z Y R V H

R M

G S V R I

Q Z D H

Z M W

I F Y

G S V R I

M L H V H

L M

G S V

O V Z E V H

G S V

Y Z Y R V H

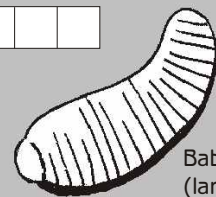
H K R M

G S V

H R O P

Baby ant (larva)

Want to learn more about Ants?

Check out the reference books *Ants of Northern Australia* by Alan Andersen and *Australian Ants* by S. Shuttuck.

