

AB: Reading

English R 7

Ants are not something we think about when we hear the word „insects“. You might have heard of the leaf cutter ant and their amazing abilities. However these little animals can do many more amazing things.

These creatures are some of the most fascinating and hardworking insects on the planet. Scientists estimated that there are roughly 20 quadrillion individual ants on the planet, more than 12 000 ant species over the world - and they have been on our planet since the Jurassic period. So ants lived side by side with some of the largest animals and even outlived them.

They are animals without ears or lungs, they have two stomachs and can hold their breath up to 24 hours under water. Some of the ant species have tremendous strength, others are highly aggressive and inhabit large territories.

What all ant species have in common is that they are organized in a social order.

While one ant by itself does not possess a brain activity or intelligence than larger mammals, their collective behaviors and interactions within colonies demonstrate remarkable intelligence.

Have you ever seen an ant hill? It just looks like a pile of sand, but inside you will find an extremely well organized community called ant colony.

Within the colony, each ant has a special task. All of them are organized around one queen ant. There are worker ants which gather food, care for the young, and maintain the nest. Soldier ants protect the colony, while the queen ant lays thousands of eggs.

They use chemicals called pheromones to 'talk' to each other. When an ant finds something interesting, it releases a pheromone trail for other ants to follow, helping the colony stay connected. They also use touch and vibrations to recognize family members and share information.

While an ant hill is already quite impressive, some ants have formed colonies as large as tennis courts by interconnecting their underground nests.

An Argentinian ant species is known for building the largest colonies on earth, the so called mega or super colonies.

One colony in Europe spreads across 6000 km from of the coasts of Portugal, Spain, France and Italy and contains millions of interconnected nest.

Next time you meet an ant, remember - this tiny creature has to have some respect for its achievements.

(381 words)

