

Shining Guest Ant,

Shining guest ants are shiny jewels living in the cruel world of a wood ants nest! Why do these truly shining ants choose to live in such a busy and potentially dangerous environment of acid spraying wood ants? Well there are some good reasons...



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Cairngorms
NATIONAL PARK
Pàirc Nàiseanta a' Mhonaidh Ruaidh

Cosy Homes

Wood ant nests, common features of our pine forests, are truly remarkable structures. The mounds of pine needles you can easily spot from forest trails, home to thousands of ants, are ingenious structures of a pine needle thatched roof, acting like a solar panels. Maintaining the nest at a balmy 25 - 30°C from the first warm days of spring until the winter chill bites creates very comfortable living for the tiny shining guest ants.

Protective Army

As well as providing a cosy home the wood ants themselves act like a protective army. Working in unity wood ants protect and defend their nests from intruders and attackers. Using alarm pheromones to communicate to each other they can instantly mobilise their defence of formic acid to disable attackers, protecting themselves and their hosts, shining guest ants.

Ant Restaurant

Wood ants also kindly provide a continuous supply of food including invertebrates from the surrounding forest and honeydew they milk from aphids they hold captive on the pine trees.

How do they survive?

Shining guest ants are clever! They have made themselves very distasteful to wood ants, so much so that if a hungry ant fancies a shining guest ant snack it will immediately drop the foul tasting ant as soon as it touches its jaws in utter disgust.

What are we doing to protect Shining Guest Ants?

Very little else is known about this species, we are trying to ascertain its distribution across the Cairngorms National Park. Cairngorm Nature through the Rare Invertebrates in the Cairngorms project are working to better understand this species and gather more information about its distribution and numbers. The more we know the more we can help landowners and managers help protect them.

What can you do?

These minute shining guest ants can be seen on the surface of wood ant nests. Spotting their small shining body's takes a little bit of patience and a keen eye, but it is very exciting and rewarding when you do see one. If you are lucky to spot a nest with a shining guest ant in it you can help the project by recording your finding on i-Record, visit

www.brc.ac.uk/irecrod/join/rare-invertebrates-in-the-cairngorms for more details.



Stay home

**Protect the NHS
Save lives**

The current government advice is that there should be no unnecessary travel at this time. Whilst it is important to get outside and exercise you must do so locally and observe social distancing measures. To enjoy the outdoors you can undertake exercise such as a run, walk, or cycle. This should be done alone or only with people you live with. During this period there should be no wild camping, fires or barbecues anywhere in the Park.