



Exotic Ants

Exotic ants in northern Australia

The Issue

Some of the world's worst invasive species are exotic ants. These ants are significant threats to both biodiversity and agricultural production, and are major pests in households. Two of the most significant exotic ant species in northern Australia are the African Big-headed ant (*Pheidole megacephala*) and the Yellow Crazy ant (*Anoplolepis gracilipes*). The African Big-headed ant is well established in Darwin, and is rapidly spreading throughout northern Australia, including within conservation areas. The Yellow Crazy ant was recently discovered in the remote Gove Peninsula of eastern Arnhem Land and is also rapidly spreading. This ant is most famous for its impact on Christmas Island, where it has eliminated the Red Land Crab from areas that it infests. A third serious pest species, the Red Imported Fire ant (*Solenopsis invicta*), was detected in Brisbane in 2001, and could potentially spread throughout northern Australia.

CSIRO Research

CSIRO has been undertaking research into the ecology and impacts of Big-headed ants since 1996, in collaboration with Charles Darwin Territory University and the NT Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Environment. Initial research was conducted at Howard Springs Conservation Reserve and demonstrated the dramatic impact of this ant on native invertebrate biodiversity. In 2001/2002, CSIRO and Environment Australia conducted a large-scale eradication of this ant from the World Heritage Listed Kakadu National Park.

CSIRO is currently collaborating with Dhimurru Land Management Aboriginal Corporation, Indigenous Land Corporation, Northern Land Council, Environment Australia, Northern Territory Government and local Aboriginal communities to eradicate the Yellow Crazy ant from Arnhem Land. Dr Alan Andersen chairs the steering committee overseeing the management of this ant from Christmas Island.

Research Staff

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Collaborators

Dhimurru Land Management Aboriginal Corporation, Indigenous Land Corporation, Northern Land Council, Environment Australia, NT Government, Charles Darwin University

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