



Introducing the Big Headed Ant!

Objective: To introduce the Big Headed Ant, generate questions about what and why we need to know about them, and learn basic classification skills in order to start identifying them from other insects and ants.

Classroom Activities

1. Class Discussion and Journal

Distribute the *Big Headed Ant Project Information Sheet* for students to read and paste into their journals. Ask the class to discuss any information they already have about the ants (maybe through the media?), including any known places they are in. Introduce the CSIRO BHAnt Distribution Mapping project and get the class to brainstorm why it is important to know where the ants are, and what other aspects of their distribution might be useful to know about (e.g. what kind of habitat are they found in, what are they doing, what human activities seem to attract them?). What skills will students need to collect this information? How can we identify Big Headed Ants (under the microscope, in the field?). This can be used to introduce the value of classification and identification skills. Get students to record their ideas in their Journals and keep a class record of questions raised.

2. Identifying Ants from Pitfall Samples.

This activity will need to be set up in advance of the class, or alternatively could be set up by the class at the end

of a previous lesson. You will need one *plastic jar* for every group of 2 to 3 students (supplied), a *post-hole digger or several hand trowels* and *200ml x (number of sample jars) solution of propylene glycol (antifreeze or other preservative) and water (1:3)*. Select an area in the school yard that is not likely to be disturbed and get each group of students to dig a hole for their sample jar disturbing the soil as little as possible and leaving the jar buried with the lid removed and the top lip flush with the soil surface. Sample jars should be left in the ground for 4 to 7 days, but removed if there are signs of heavy rain. When removed, replace the soil and screw on the plastic lid.

Back in the classroom each sample can be sieved, with insects removed and placed into a *weak alcohol solution* in a *glass sample jar*. Get each group of students to split the insects in their sample between them and ask them to separate out the ants from the other insects. Ants are distinguished by having six legs, a head, forebody and hindbody (abdomen) and one pair of antennae. They also have one or two tiny bumps between the forebody and the abdomen which are unique to ants. Students may require *forceps, paint-brushes, microscopes and/or hand*



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