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HEADED BY AN ENTOMOLOGIST

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# The Pest Bulletin

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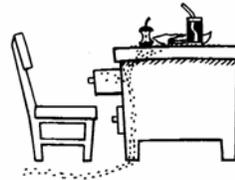
## Ants: Ongoing Invaders

For a number of years now ants have been the #1 pest problem in the country—more homeowners have ant problems than any other pest. In reality, every unprotected household experiences ant problems either occasionally or constantly.

This is because ants are continually reinvading areas in their search for food, water, and shelter. For many species, our homes provide all or most of their vital needs. Ant scouts are constantly on the search to find these resources. Usually unseen by us, the many tiny cracks and crevices they find to invade homes are like huge eight-lane highways to them.

Ant colonies are pulsating with activity this time of year. Nature is providing an abundance of food, queen ants are laying eggs like there is no tomorrow, and ant numbers are increasing rapidly with the warm weather.

Depending on the ant species, each colony may have just one, or many egg-laying queens. Those colonies that have many queens can grow more quickly and tend to be our worst ant problems. Each of these colonies can produce hundreds of ant eggs every day. These are mostly not our native ant species, but have invaded



here from other parts of the world.

You can't control these huge monster colonies by killing just a few ants—the monster will come back quickly, and sometimes

their colonies are much bigger than we suspect. Only with our regular and professional control can an ant problem be stopped and new ant problems be prevented. Please help spread the word—we are the *area ant-elimination experts!*

## Termite Damage is Often Hidden

Like many criminals, termites operate mostly in the dark, hidden from view. Termites tunnel INSIDE wood, away from light and drying air, rather than on the surface. Because of this, they often remain unnoticed by homeowners for years while they gradually weaken a wooden structure.



In addition to cracks, concrete has other hidden "termite highways". Holes for electrical conduits and plumbing, as well as expansion joints, are often used by these pests to enter a structure. Even porches made of concrete often have a dirt fill underneath that piles soil right up to various cracks and openings.

Termites can travel through such cracks directly to structural wood, completely hidden from view.

Because termites use these and other hidden avenues to enter a structure, they often stay hidden for years while they are causing damage. Our professional termite services are a wise investment that can help detect and control termites and other wood-destroying pests, protecting your property from extensive damage.

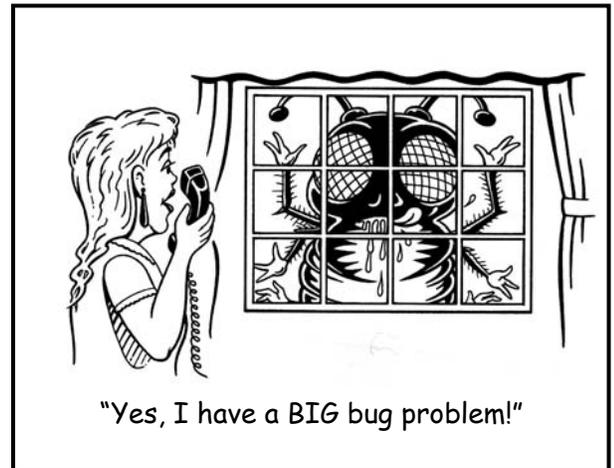
Termites also work unnoticed and uncontrolled because the common subterranean termites attack a structure directly from their already hidden colonies in the soil. They find their way into an unprotected home in a variety of ways. Concrete seems impenetrable, but in fact as a concrete foundation and piers age they develop cracks that termites can easily crawl through. Termites can crawl through a tiny crack in cement *as small as 1/64 of an inch wide*, directly into wood—all well hidden from view!

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## Invasion of Cat-Sized Rats



The Florida Keys is battling an infestation of Gambian Giant Pouched Rats. The six-to-nine pound, cat-sized rats first appeared on Grassy Key over 12 years ago after a local exotic pets breeder let some escape. Officials have been trying to eliminate them for years by baiting and trapping, but the giant rats have multiplied and proven themselves a difficult and resilient pest. Each female produces about 30 young per year.

The concern is that if they make it to the mainland, they will damage crops and will likely harm native animals. These rats also can carry monkeypox and other diseases.

## Spiders Close Post Office

The discovery of an infestation of brown recluse spiders caused the United States Post Office to close one of its Louisville branch post offices recently.

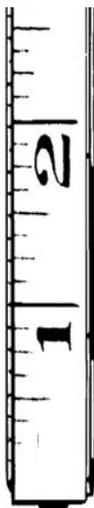
The spiders were discovered where the employees sort the mail. Brown recluse spiders are highly poisonous; their bite can cause a severe lesion by destroying skin tissue. Fortunately it is not an aggressive species and no one was bitten.

The post office was set to be closed for up to two weeks while the spiders were being eradicated. Because all mail is sealed, fortunately there is no danger that spiders infested any mail that went through the facility.



## Giant Wasp Discovered

A gigantic 2 ½ inch long wasp, the largest wasp ever discovered, has been found in Indonesia. Almost nothing is known about this new species. The males have huge spiked jaws that they probably use to protect their nests. The area they were discovered in is so remote no one has reported being stung by the monsters.



## Protecting Children from Poisonings

You may have missed the 50th National Poison Prevention Week, March 18-24, 2012, but the cautions presented then are important to incorporate into all of our daily lifestyles.



In just the last year, America's 57 poison control centers answered 2.4 million emergency calls of people exposed to poisons. Poisonings in children younger than six years old account for more than half of these calls, which underscores the importance of locking up household chemicals out of children's reach—preferably in a high cabinet.

Be aware that common household products that can seriously harm a child if ingested include medicines, hair and nail products, disinfectants, cleaners (including chlorine), sanitizers, paints, glues, automotive products like anti-freeze, swimming pool chemicals, and pesticides. Take time now to lock up or remove, as much as possible, any of these containers.

Never buy illegal pesticides, including pesticide chinks, because these pose higher risks. Fortunately you probably have far fewer pesticide containers around your home because you use our professional services, and that in itself is an important safety measure.

## Monster Snake on Display

A 2,500 pound, 48-foot long (as long as a bus), *titanoboa snake* recently shocked commuters in New York's Grand Central Station. Fortunately it is not alive, but is a life-size replica of the remains of a giant prehistoric snake first discovered in Columbia in a coal mine in 2005.

In this case truth is actually larger than fiction, because the snake is bigger than the giant predator snake that terrorized and ate people in the movie *Anaconda*.



## Why Do Zebras Have Stripes?

Animal researchers have theorized for years that a zebra's stripes confuse predators like lions, but new research just published shows the stripes have a surprising benefit—they actually help protect the zebras from biting insects. Since biting pests carry many diseases as well as constantly distract animals from feeding, it is possible that the reduction in pest activity could be an even more important benefit of having stripes than protection from lions.

The researchers looked at biting horse flies in their tests. These and many other insects are able to detect polarized light as it is reflected off of surfaces like animal hides. Uniform surfaces have a very uniform polarization pattern, but stripes on a surface change the polarization pattern of the reflected light. By collecting horse flies that were attracted to black, brown, white, and striped horse models, the researchers showed that the flies were least attracted to the striped models. Further tests showed the exact thickness of the zebra stripes were an optimal thickness to reduce horse fly attacks.