

## Last Nature Matters Lecture: Ants Marching

*A biological invasion in your own backyard*

May 4, 2009

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You might have noticed them: a plague of ants found in many gardens in the San Diego area. They seem pervasive, and they are - part of a supercolony that stretches from here to Ukiah 100 miles north of San Francisco.

Invaders from Argentina, they are one of the world's most widespread, abundant and damaging invasive species. On May 14, David Holway will talk about the traits and behaviors that have allowed this species to spread so far in the final lecture of a series sponsored by the Division of Biological Sciences called Nature Matters.

Holway, an associate professor of biology at UC San Diego, will tell why Argentine ants, believed to have arrived in shipments of coffee in the 1890s, have thrived in Southern California.

Like other social insects including termites and wasps, the ants form dense, well-protected and long-lived colonies that profoundly alter the ecosystems in which they live. An adaptable diet and rules about who to fight that have led to a different population pattern in California compared to that found in Argentina where constant warfare among competing colonies limits their size.

Humans too have profoundly altered the Southern California landscape, and Holway will tell how that has abetted the invasion of the ants and how his work points to potential strategies for limiting their abundance. Understanding invasive species can form the basis for a better understanding and management of our local ecosystems, which are increasingly under siege from introduced organisms, he said.

Holway will speak at the San Diego Natural History Museum in Balboa Park on Thursday, May 14 at 6:30 pm. The event is free, and registration at the museum begins at 6:00 pm.

UCSD-TV will tape each event for later broadcast on local cable channels. For more information about the series, including directions, parking and broadcast schedule, visit the web site: Nature Matters. The San Diego Natural History Museum offers additional public programs.

Amylin Pharmaceuticals, The Ray Thomas Edwards Foundation and Kirin Pharma provided generous funding to enable UC San Diego to bring our 2008-2009 Science Matters Lecture Series to you.

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