

Invasive ants threaten native Australian butterfly

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A widespread invasive ant species is posing a significant threat to native Australian butterflies.

Research conducted on the periphery of the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area in northeastern Australia, which contains 58% of country's butterfly species, revealed that yellow crazy ants are far more likely to attack native cruiser butterfly caterpillars than native green tree ants.

The federal government is currently considering a proposal to fund an eradication program but is unlikely to do so without state and local government support. Anecdotal evidence of the ants' effects in the area is plentiful, but this study provides the first experimental evidence.

"Yellow crazy [ants](#) have caused a cascade of ecological effects on Christmas Island. Though we can't predict exactly what effect they will have in the Wet Tropics if left untreated, we expect that most of the flora and fauna will be directly or indirectly affected," said Dr. Lori Lach, lead author of the *Biotropica* study. "Considering the extraordinary biodiversity values of this World Heritage Area, we cannot afford to be complacent."

More information: Lori Lach et al. High Invasive Ant Activity Drives Predation of a Native Butterfly Larva, *Biotropica* (2015). [DOI: 10.1111/btp.12284](https://doi.org/10.1111/btp.12284)

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