

**Common Name:** Yellow Crazy Ants, Long Legged Ant

**Binominal Name:** *Anoplolepis gracilipes*

**Synonyms:** *Formica longipes*

**Order:** Hymenoptera

**Family:** Ants

**Origin:** Thought to have originated in West Africa, India, or China. Widely introduced across the subtropics and tropics, including East Africa (2 countries), South and Southeast Asia (9 countries), Australasia (2 countries), and the Indo-Pacific Islands (20 island groups) and Mexico.

The ants have spread across 2500km<sup>2</sup> in the Nth Territory after being introduced into east Arnhem Land. They have been intercepted in Australian ports, about 40% in NSW ports. In NSW the ants were detected around a wharf and nearby farmland on Goodwood Island, lower Clarence River in 2004. Modelling of the potential distribution using climate matching, suggests that the ant is capable of inhabiting from the Kimberley through Darwin, Cape York Peninsula, and down the eastern seaboard of Queensland into coastal and inland parts of northern NSW.

Yellow crazy ants are notable for its frenetic activity when disturbed and its long legs and antennae. They lack a sting but subdues and kills prey by spraying formic acid.

#### **Worker and Queen**



**Workers** bodies are 4-5mm long and slender. The gaster is usually darker than the head and thorax.



**Queens** are approximately 10mm long and much more robust than workers



The Yellow crazy ant is polygynous (multi-queened) and there is not intraspecific aggression amongst workers, nor towards other ants unless defending resources. A single nest can contain more than 1000 queens and tens of thousands of workers.

The life cycle of the ant is estimated to take 75-78 days. Workers live for approximately 6 months, and the queens for several years. Colony budding is the main source of dispersal although winged queens and males have been caught in traps suspended in rainforest trees on Christmas Island, Indian Ocean.

The ant is a scavenger with a broad diet including a variety of littler and canopy fauna including small isopods, myriapods, earthworms, molluscs, arachnids, and insects to large land crabs, birds, mammal and reptiles. They obtain carbohydrates and amino acids from plant nectaries and especially from honeydew excreted by aphids and scales, which they tend on stems and leaves of a wide variety of tree and shrub species.

#### **Impacts**

Yellow Crazy Ants is declared a notifiable pest under the NSW Plant Diseases Act 1924, Proclamation P163.

The Scientific Committee, established by the Threatened Species Conservation Act, has made a Final Determination to list the Invasion of the Yellow Crazy Ant *Anoplolepis gracilipes* (Fr. Smith) into NSW as a KEY THREATENING PROCESS on Schedule 3 of the Act. Listing of a Key Threatening Process is provided for by Part 2 of the Act.

The ant poses a significant threat to biodiversity as the ants have the potential to displace native fauna. A range of other ground-dwelling invertebrates and vertebrates may be affected in NSW. Species and populations in NSW that may become threatened by the presence the Yellow Crazy Ant include ants such as *Rhytidoponera* spp., *Pheidole* spp., *Paratrechina* spp., Eastern Sedgefrog *Litoria fallax*, Eastern Grass Skink *Lampropholis delicata*, and a burrowing skink *Ophioscincus truncates*. It is capable of invading both disturbed and undisturbed tropical and subtropical habitats, including urban areas, rural villages, plantations, coastal strand, grassland, savanna, woodland, and rainforest.

### **Control**

In NSW DPI has baited Yellow Crazy Ants with the pesticides fipronil, formulated as Presto, and S-methoprene. Continual monitoring in NSW, Qld and Northern Territory is ongoing.

Source: <https://www.thewildmartin.com/ant-ecology/yellow-crazy-ants-care-guide-and-ecology>;  
<https://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/Topics/Animals-and-plants/Threatened-species/NSW-Threatened-Species-Scientific-Committee/Determinations/Final-determinations/2004-2007/Invasion-of-the-yellow-crazy-ant>;  
<https://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/resources/pestsweeds/RRRegionRPMSSep07.pdf>  
<https://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/threatenedspeciesapp/profileData.aspx?id=20010&cmaName=NSW+North+Coast>