

To: jeevacation@gmail.com[jeevacation@gmail.com]; Jeffrey Epstein[jeevacation@gmail.com]
From: Corina Tarnita
Sent: Sat 4/14/2012 8:04:16 AM
Subject: Re:

i'm studying relationships between ants and trees -- ants defend trees against herbivores; trees provide food and shelter for the ants. and there's a very interesting ant that in certain parts of kenya is a good mutualist and in other parts is parasitic (sterilizes the tree and prevents it from reproduction). i made a model to show that can happen when the system is invaded by another ant species which is aggressive and dominant -- so the presence of a third species can lead to a switch in the behavior of an existing one, from mutualist to parasite.

the reason it sterilizes is because then the tree diverts the energy resources otherwise used for reproduction into making more food and shelter for the ants. this way the ant colony gets larger and stronger and has a much better chance against takeovers by the invader.

now that trees are budding and flowering we're going to different regions where the invasive ant is present, absent, or present but not yet spread all over the system, and measure how that affects the behavior of the other ant species. thus far it's quite promising -- the hypothesis seems to be supported and the model turns out to be predictive of the amount of sterilization observed in the different regions.

have you ever been to kenya? i'm falling in love with the place..

On Thu, Apr 12, 2012 at 9:03 AM, Jeffrey Epstein <jeevacation@gmail.com> wrote:

what is the experiment

On Thu, Apr 12, 2012 at 8:13 AM, Corina Tarnita [REDACTED] wrote:

dear jeffrey,

i'm so sorry but i will miss your visit to cambridge. i'm in kenya now at a research center here doing modeling and field work with my collaborators and we decided to extend the trip because finally the rains are coming (and that part is crucial for our experiment).

i'm really really sorry and hope to see you sometime soon.

c

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