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AUSTRALIA FIELD GUIDE

The Ant Nuptial Flight Calendar



When queen ants take to the sky — a month-by-month guide to catching queens across Australia.

A free field companion for
ant keepers & queen hunters

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BEFORE YOU BEGIN

The 6 Rules of Queen Hunting

A nuptial flight is the day a colony sends its winged queens and males into the air to mate.

Australia's calendar is flipped and its ants are unlike anywhere else — so throw out the northern charts and learn the local rhythm. These six rules decide whether you come home with a queen.

1 Flip the calendar

Australia's seasons are inverted: **spring (Sep–Nov) and summer (Dec–Feb)** are prime, autumn (Mar–May) is still strong, and **winter (Jun–Aug)** is the quiet gap in the south. Ignore northern-hemisphere charts entirely.

2 Chase the storms

The classic trigger is a **warm, humid day or evening after rain or a thunderstorm**. Damp ground lets new queens dig in, and humidity keeps them safe aloft. Storm-chasing is the whole game here.

3 Two big peaks, not one

Australia has **two headline events**: the spring **meat ant** flights (October, after rain) and the autumn **banded sugar ant** dusk swarms (March). Circle both.

4 Mind the region

The **tropical north (the Top End)** flies with the wet season (Nov–Apr); the temperate south flies spring to autumn; **Tasmania** has a short summer window. Your local weather is the final word.

5 Know the clock

Timing is species-specific: meat ants fly **midday after rain**; banded sugar ants swarm at **dusk**; many summer species go on humid afternoons and evenings. Each month's table tells you.

6 Respect the sting

Many Australian queens — **bull ants and jack jumpers** especially — sting hard, and jack jumper stings can cause **severe allergic reactions**. Always use a container, never bare hands.

How to read this book: Each month lists the species most likely to fly, their peak window, the weather trigger to watch, and a catch-difficulty rating (★ easy → ★★★ tricky). A de-winged queen walking on the ground has already mated and is ready to found a colony — she is the one you want.

January

MIDSUMMER
the height of the heat

The peak of summer. On hot, humid days and after thunderstorms, the sugar ants, funnel ants, spiny ants and heat-loving furnace ants take flight, and in the south the jack jumpers are out.

SPECIES	STATUS	BEST WINDOW	TRIGGER	CATCH
Sugar Ants <i>Camponotus spp.</i>	PEAK	Peak January	Hot, humid afternoons & evenings	★
Funnel Ants <i>Aphaenogaster longiceps</i>	PEAK	Peak January	Humid days after rain	★★
Furnace Ants <i>Melophorus spp.</i>	PEAK	Peak Jan (hot inland)	Very hot midday heat	★★★
Big-headed / Coastal Brown Ants <i>Pheidole spp.</i>	PEAK	Peak January	Warm, humid days after rain	★★
Jack Jumper <i>Myrmecia pilosula group</i>	PEAK	Peak Jan (south & Tas)	Warm summer days	★★★

SAFETY NOTE Jack jumpers (*Myrmecia pilosula*) deliver a powerful sting that can cause **SEVERE ALLERGIC REACTIONS** in some people — never handle them bare-handed. For an easy, safe first catch, target the fully claustral sugar ants instead.

February

LATE SUMMER
humidity & the first swarms

Summer's tail. Spiny ants peak in the humidity, bull ants are on the wing, and the first banded sugar ant evening flights hint at the autumn spectacle to come.

SPECIES	STATUS	BEST WINDOW	TRIGGER	CATCH
Spiny Ants <i>Polyrhachis spp.</i>	PEAK	Peak February	Muggy days after rain	★★★
Bull Ants <i>Myrmecia spp.</i>	ACTIVE	Summer–autumn	Warm, humid afternoons	★★★
Sugar Ants <i>Camponotus spp.</i>	ACTIVE	Tail of summer	Hot, humid evenings	★
Banded Sugar Ant <i>Camponotus consobrinus</i>	EARLY	Building to March	Warm, humid evenings at dusk	★
Funnel Ants <i>Aphaenogaster longiceps</i>	ACTIVE	Through summer	Humid days after rain	★★

KEEPER'S NOTE *Polyrhachis* spiny ants fly on the muggiest days after rain — striking, golden-haired queens that are a favourite of Australian keepers. Note that some *Polyrhachis* are semi-claustral and will need feeding while founding.

March

EARLY AUTUMN

★ the banded sugar ant swarm ★

One of the two great events of the Australian ant year. On warm, humid March evenings, the banded sugar ant *Camponotus consobrinus* pours out at dusk in huge synchronised swarms across the south-east.

SPECIES	STATUS	BEST WINDOW	TRIGGER	CATCH
Banded Sugar Ant <i>Camponotus consobrinus</i>	PEAK	Peak March, at dusk	Warm, humid, still evenings	★
Bull Ants <i>Myrmecia spp.</i>	ACTIVE	Autumn	Warm, humid afternoons	★★★
Spiny Ants <i>Polyrhachis spp.</i>	ACTIVE	Tail of summer	Muggy days after rain	★★★
Funnel Ants <i>Aphaenogaster longiceps</i>	ACTIVE	Autumn	Humid days after rain	★★
Big-headed Ants <i>Pheidole spp.</i>	ACTIVE	Warm autumn days	Warm, humid days after rain	★★

KEEPER'S NOTE The banded sugar ant is the south-east's beginner's dream — enormous dusk swarms on warm, humid evenings across Sydney, Canberra, Melbourne and Adelaide, and it's fully claustral and hardy. Check verandah lights, fences and footpaths at dusk and again after dark.

April & May

MID-LATE AUTUMN
the south winds down

The southern season winds down. Late banded sugar ant and bull ant flights taper on the last warm, humid days, while the subtropical east and the north stay active longer.

SPECIES	STATUS	BEST WINDOW	TRIGGER	CATCH
Banded Sugar Ant <i>Camponotus consobrinus</i>	ACTIVE	Apr, tailing into May	Warm, humid evenings at dusk	★
Bull Ants <i>Myrmecia spp.</i>	ACTIVE	Through autumn	Mild, humid afternoons	★★★
Sugar Ants <i>Camponotus spp.</i>	EARLY	Last stragglers	Warm, humid days	★

KEEPER'S NOTE Bull ants (*Myrmecia*) can fly right through autumn — but remember they are **SEMI-CLAUSTRAL**: unlike sugar ants, the founding queen must be offered food (small insects and a little sugar water) to raise her first workers. Plan for that before you catch one.

June – August

WINTER
the quiet season

Winter in the temperate south slows flights to a stop, and the tropical north is in its dry season and also quiet. Across most of the country, this is the off-season — time to prepare.

WHAT'S HAPPENING	STATUS	WINDOW	NOTES	CATCH
Very few flights <i>Temperate south dormant</i>	QUIET	Jun – Aug	Cold south; dry-season north also quiet	—

KEEPER'S NOTE Southern colonies slow right down in winter — a natural, healthy rest; no artificial deep hibernation is needed as in colder countries, but keep them cool and undisturbed. Tropical species stay active year-round, yet flights stay minimal until the wet season builds. Use these weeks to clean and set up tubes and outworlds for the spring reopening in September.

September

SPRING

the season reopens

Spring reopens the hunting year. As the ground warms and the first spring storms arrive, the coastal brown and big-headed ants take to the air and the earliest meat ants begin.

SPECIES	STATUS	BEST WINDOW	TRIGGER	CATCH
Big-headed / Coastal Brown Ants <i>Pheidole spp.</i>	ACTIVE	Spring–summer	Warm, humid days after rain	★★
Meat Ants <i>Iridomyrmex purpureus</i>	EARLY	Building to October	Warm days after spring rain	★★

KEEPER'S NOTE Watch the first warm, humid days after spring rain. The meat ant season is about to open — and October is the big one. Now is the moment to scout local meat ant mounds so you know exactly where to be.

October

MID SPRING
★ the meat ant flights ★

The second great event of the year. In October, after spring rain, meat ant colonies warm their winged queens and males on the mound and launch them all at once — a spectacular synchronised flight.

SPECIES	STATUS	BEST WINDOW	TRIGGER	CATCH
Meat Ants <i>Iridomyrmex purpureus</i>	PEAK	Peak October	Warm days after spring rain	★★
Big-headed / Coastal Brown Ants <i>Pheidole spp.</i>	ACTIVE	Spring–summer	Warm, humid days after rain	★★

KEEPER'S NOTE Meat ants are one of Australia's most iconic species — big gravel mounds and famously synchronised October flights after rain. The queens are fully claustral and make a rewarding catch. Watch the mounds on the warm morning after a spring shower.

November

LATE SPRING
the heat builds

The heat builds towards summer. Meat ant flights tail off, the summer sugar ants and big-headed ants get going, and spring storms trigger scattered flights right across the country.

SPECIES	STATUS	BEST WINDOW	TRIGGER	CATCH
Meat Ants <i>Iridomyrmex purpureus</i>	ACTIVE	Tail of the season	Warm days after rain	★★
Sugar Ants <i>Camponotus spp.</i>	EARLY	Building to summer	Hot, humid evenings	★
Big-headed Ants <i>Pheidole spp.</i>	ACTIVE	Spring–summer	Warm, humid days after rain	★★
Bull Ants <i>Myrmecia spp.</i>	EARLY	Warm spring days	Warm, humid afternoons	★★★

KEEPER'S NOTE A transition month — the tail of the spring meat-ant wave meets the first summer sugar-ant flights. Storm-chasing pays off now: a hot, humid afternoon after a November thunderstorm can put several species in the air at once.

December

EARLY SUMMER

the summer engine starts

Summer arrives. Sugar ants, funnel ants and furnace ants ramp up on hot days and after storms, and the first jack jumpers appear in the cooler south.

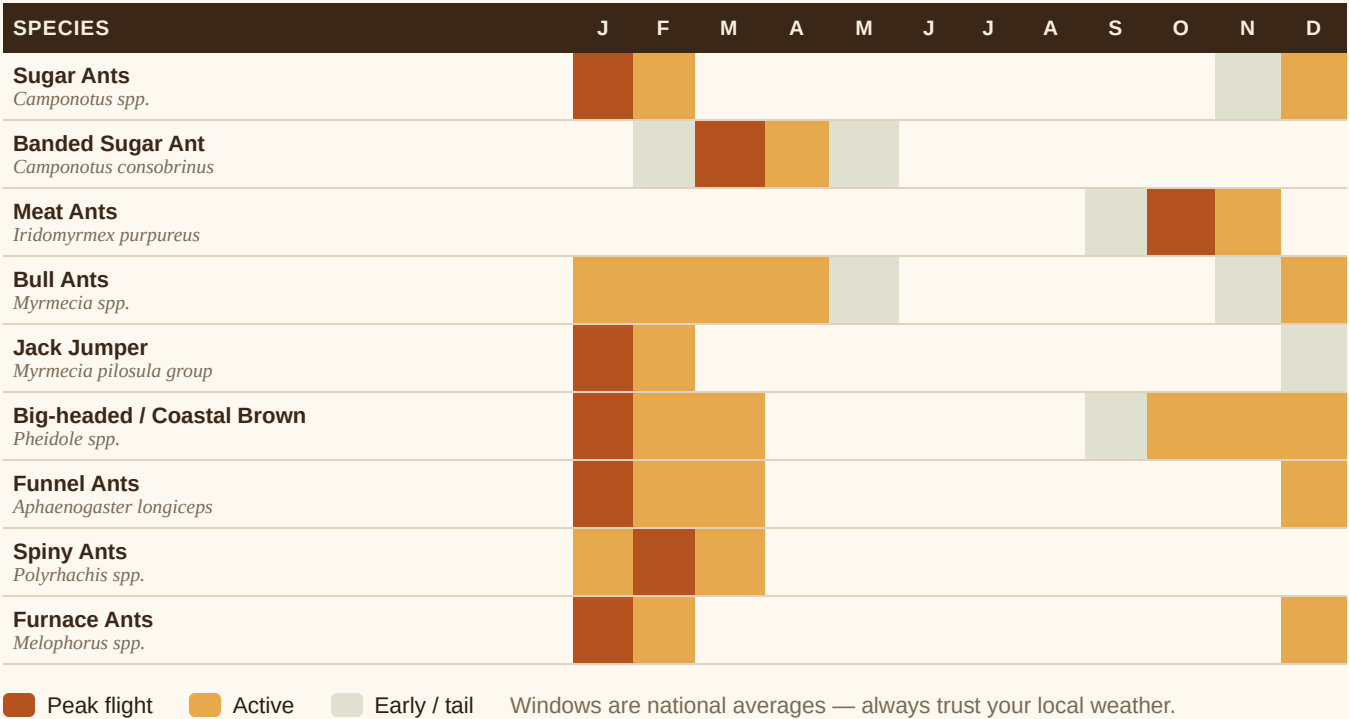
SPECIES	STATUS	BEST WINDOW	TRIGGER	CATCH
Sugar Ants <i>Camponotus spp.</i>	ACTIVE	Building to Jan peak	Hot, humid afternoons & evenings	★
Funnel Ants <i>Aphaenogaster longiceps</i>	ACTIVE	Summer	Humid days after rain	★★
Furnace Ants <i>Melophorus spp.</i>	ACTIVE	Hot summer days	Very hot midday heat	★★★
Jack Jumper <i>Myrmecia pilosula group</i>	EARLY	Building to Jan (south)	Warm summer days	★★★
Bull Ants <i>Myrmecia spp.</i>	ACTIVE	Summer	Warm, humid afternoons	★★★

KEEPER'S NOTE The summer engine starts. Hot, humid afternoons and evening storms are your cue. Keep a little water on hand — founding queens dehydrate fast in the Australian heat, so shade and moisture matter from the moment you catch one.

PULL-OUT REFERENCE

The Australian Year at a Glance

Every major Australian keeper species and its flight window on one page. **Dark = peak**, gold = active, pale = early/tail. Note the winter gap (Jun–Aug) — and always trust your local weather and region.



THE PAYOFF

You Caught a Queen — Now What?

A de-winged queen walking on the ground has already mated. Here's how to bring her home and start your first colony the right way.

1

Confirm she's a mated queen

Look for a larger ant with a bulky thorax and **no wings** (or wing stubs). Wingless and walking = mated and ready. Still winged = she may not have flown yet.

2

Collect her safely

Coax her into a small container — **never bare hands**, especially with bull ants and jack jumpers, whose stings hurt and can trigger allergic reactions. A clean jar or tube works.

3

Prepare a test-tube setup

Quarter-fill a test tube with water, plug it with a tight cotton-wool ball to trap a reservoir, add the queen, and stopper the open end with a second ball of cotton wool.

4

Dark, warm, undisturbed

Keep the tube somewhere dark at room temperature (around 24–28 °C suits most Australian species). **Don't keep checking her** — stress is the number-one killer of founding queens. A glance once a week is plenty.

5

Know if she needs feeding

Fully claustral queens (sugar ants / *Camponotus*, meat ants / *Iridomyrmex*, *Pheidole*) raise the first workers on their own reserves — **don't feed them**. Semi-claustral queens (bull ants and jack jumpers / *Myrmecia*, some *Polyrhachis*) **must be offered food** — small insects and a little sugar water.

6

Wait for nanitics

Over a few weeks she'll raise her first tiny workers ("nanitics"). Once workers appear, begin offering sugar water and small insects for all species, and plan the move to a formicarium.

One queen, one rule: patience. The keepers who lose queens are almost always the ones who open the tube too often. Note your catch date and species — then leave her be and let nature do the work.

TRACK EVERY FLIGHT IN REAL TIME

Never miss a nuptial flight again.

This calendar tells you *when* to look. **ColonyCue** tells you when it's happening *right now* — tuned to your corner of Australia — and helps you raise every queen you catch.

- Local flight alerts tuned to your state & weather
- Log your queens and track founding progress
- Care sheets for sugar ants, meat ants, bull ants & more
- Free keeper playbooks & guides from AntAddict

Start free at colonycue.app →