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Animal Buttons: ANTS *by Joy Journey*

Queen ants can live up to 30 years and are the longest living of any insect species. Workers usually live from one to three years though. There are over 22,000 species of ants. Ants are thought to be about 25% of the total biomass weight of land-based animals. That's the same as all the humans on earth, or about one million ants per human!

Some ants are up to two inches long. Ants are found worldwide except in Antarctica and a few very remote islands. At any time there are over one quadrillion ants alive: that's a number with fifteen zeros after it!

Ants can carry items 20 times their own weight and travel up to 700 feet from their nest to find food, finding their way back by following the scent of other ants who traveled before.

Ants are social animals, which means they live in colonies and divide up the work. They also solve problems together. Queen ants are the lead of the ant colony and grow wings, which they use to fly and start a new colony. They lay thousands of eggs. Drone ants are males who also grow wings and mate with the queen. Both lose their wings when mating is finished and they have a new home. The rest of the ants are female workers who build the nest, defend the colony, find food, care for the queen and her offspring.

Ants can bite or sting, and the most painful insect sting is from a bullet ant, although it will not kill you. However, the sting of the Australian jack jumper ant will kill humans.



Clockwise:

Sterling silver realistic ant with three coral stones.

Hand painted silver oval with a red ant.

Stamped white metal depicting an ant carrying a letter and bouquet of flowers.