

Long-legged Desert Ant (*Aphaenogaster cockerelli*)

Habitat and Distribution: Desert regions from Texas to California and south to Mexico, from 2,690 to 5,380 feet.

Size: Up to 3/8 of an inch

Wild Diet: Small insects such as caterpillars, beetles, etc. which they carry back to their nest, even if the prey is much larger than they are.

Predators: Western blind snakes prey on the eggs and larvae.

Life Span: 10-12 years

Reproduction: The queen mates once, and stores sperm for use over the course of her life. She excavates a brood chamber in the ground and lays a few eggs. The queen cares for the larvae (by regurgitating food for them) until they pupate and emerge as adults.

Behavior: Social, with a single reproductive queen and female workers that find food, care for the young and eggs, feed the queen and expand the nest. Occasionally, after a summer rain, reproductively viable males and females are produced. These individually fly away from the parent colony to mate and establish new colonies.

Conservation Connection: Secure

Interesting Facts: These ants have been seen plugging the nest holes of the red harvester ant (*Pogonomyrmex barbatus*) to reduce competition.

