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# Searching behaviour in Australian desert ants: a comparison of two species

Thursday 3 October 2013 1pm

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**Gould Seminar Room** (Rm 235) Gould Building (Bldg. 116), Linnaeus Way, ANU



The species-rich ant genus *Melophorus* includes some of the most thermophilic Australian insects. In their hot desert environments, foragers leave the nest solitarily. Relying strongly on visual cues, foragers are expert at finding their way on their outward journey, and at navigating back to the nest. Searching behaviour is an integral part of navigation, acting as a fallback when other strategies fail. In my talk, I will investigate this behaviour in two desert ants that inhabit vastly different visual habitats: *Melophorus bagoti* from the visually cluttered semi-arid outback of

Central Australia, and an as yet undescribed species ("*Melophorus* sp.") from the featureless dry salt-pans of South Australia. In both species, searching behaviour is remarkably flexible, and can be fine-tuned to the visual context of the search. By comparing the search strategies of both species with each other, we can begin to unravel how well they are adapted to their respective visual environments.

Presented by

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