

Citizen Science activity:
Tracking the Past and Present: Investigating *Aegeritella* Fungal Infections in Red Wood Ants

Half a century ago, Polish scientists Stanisław Bałazy and Jerzy Wiśniewski conducted a pioneering study, screening red wood ant nests for a fascinating fungal parasite, *Aegeritella*. Now, 50 years later, our project revisits their work, tracing how the distribution of this fungus has evolved over time. By comparing today's infection levels with historical data, we aim to uncover the ecological changes that have occurred, shedding light on the broader impacts on red wood ant populations and their ecosystems. Our findings could reveal key insights into the resilience of species and the shifting dynamics of parasite-host relationships.



"This is where our adventure began! (Warsaw, Museum and Institute of Zoology)! A huge thanks to the amazing team of Social and Myrmecophilus Insects for their invaluable support. Onward to exciting discoveries!"

"We packed up flyers and T-shirts for all the participants! We hope they love them as much as we do! "



"And here we are: Wielkopolski National Park! We're thrilled to have an international team on board, with researchers joining us from Germany and Hungary!"



"A team has already started sampling the ant nests! The weather is on our side, making it a perfect day for fieldwork!"



"Sampling is in full swing! We marked the ant nests and collected ten individuals from each one. Personally, I can't wait to see the results of our work!"

"A huge thank to everyone who made this project possible! With the incredible help of our volunteers, we collected 4,220 ants from 422 nests! This effort wouldn't have been possible without the support of Polonez BIS and National Science Center (Poland). Special thanks to the Museum and Institute of Zoology, PAS for always being there when I needed it. A big shoutout to the staff of Wielkopolski National Park for their invaluable assistance. And, of course, heartfelt gratitude to Bałazy S. and Wiśniewski J. for inspiring this research journey!"

