



## International Union for the Study of Social Insects

Mark Brown, Secretary-General

Centre for Ecology, Evolution, and Behaviour, Department of Biological Sciences  
School for Life Sciences and the Environment  
Royal Holloway University of London, Egham, TW20 0EX, UK

What an absolute pleasure to write to you all in my first newsletter as Secretary-General of our Union. I'd like to start by thanking everyone who has put their trust in me to lead our Union over the next few years, and I promise that I will do everything I can to leave the IUSSI even stronger at the end of my tenure. Of course, I also want to start by thanking our previous Secretary-General, Madeleine Beekman, who did such a fantastic job, and who has given me enormous support in the hand-over process. Luckily, we haven't lost Madeleine, as she is our new Editor-in-Chief of *Insectes Sociaux* (see below for an update from her). Huge thanks, of course, go to Miriam Richards for being such an excellent editor of our flagship journal. We are also hugely fortunate to have Judith Korb as our new President, and I'm sure we're all looking forward to the next International Congress of the IUSSI in Freiburg, Germany, in 2026 (again, for an update, see below). I have so many fond memories of our recent Congress - a huge thank you to Jennifer Fewell and her team - and many before, and cannot wait to see what Freiburg brings! Finally, a group many of our members may not be aware of are our financial sub-committee, and I particularly wanted to thank James Nieh (one of the newer members on the sub-committee) and Rachele Adams for all of their help and support in getting access for a non-US citizen (me!) to our bank accounts.

Below, I want to introduce an initiative proposed by James Nieh, to expand our support for Section Members around the world. In addition, you can read updates on our journal, the next International Congress, the next European Meeting, and the IUSSI Encyclopaedia! However, before I do that, I have really enjoyed Madeleine's tradition of including beautiful and relevant pictures on the front page of the Secretary-General's Newsletter, and thought I would start here with pictures of my first and current social insect loves!



*Messor andrei* (California)



*Bombus subterraneus* (UK)

# Putting EDI at the Heart of the IUSSI

Over the past few years, it has become increasingly obvious that scientific societies, like all other aspects of the global community, have a job to do in increasing equality, diversity, and inclusion. The IUSSI is not immune from this need, and it has been more than heartening seeing and being part of EDI developments at previous IUSSI International Congresses. Before going any further, I'd like to thank Chelsea Cook and the DEI Committee (aka 'JEDI') for all their work before and during the San Diego Congress, which played a major role in making this meeting more supportive, safe, and welcoming to all participants.

In my election speech in San Diego, I emphasised that I wanted to make significant progress in the IUSSI around EDI. Coming from a financially privileged (despite the best efforts of our politicians!), Western European country, I realise that it is much easier for me to attend national and international IUSSI meetings than it is for many of our colleagues. Consequently, I was delighted to hear James Nieh's suggestion of an IUSSI EDI Fund, specifically to enhance opportunities for our members who (i) are less privileged, (ii) come from minoritized communities, or (iii) from low and middle income countries (as defined by the world bank) to attend the International Congress of our Union, starting with Freiburg in 2026.

The challenge that we face is that there are limited funds from *Insectes Sociaux* (our journal is the only source of funds for the central IUSSI) for sponsoring student attendance. James's suggestion incorporates a range of potential additional funds - including targeted fund-raising by IUSSI Sections, a GoFundMe (or similar) Campaign, and the reinstatement of International Dues in a manner that is sensitive to differences between Sections and Individuals. Any monies raised would be held by the central IUSSI and disbursed specifically to support Congress attendance by members belonging to the groups defined above. This would, of course, be done following our best practice, and involve the Financial Subcommittee, the IUSSI President, and Section Presidents.

I will be sending your Section Presidents a more detailed version of this proposal, for them to discuss with you. I hope, and believe, that our membership will support this groundbreaking proposal, and enable our colleagues from all around the world to attend our International Congresses. We, and our science, will be richer for it!

# News from *Insectes Sociaux*

Madeleine Beekman, Editor-in-Chief

How time flies; it will soon be a year since I took over from Miriam as EIC of *Insectes Sociaux* and I continue to learn new things. About social insects, but also about how to handle difficult decisions as I will never forget how hard it is to receive a rejection..... I think that being rejected is the one part of being an academic one will never get used to (sorry, younger academics for bursting that bubble).

I must say that it is a pleasure to work with a wonderful team of Associate Editors and a dedicated Editorial Board. Both take part in selecting the best paper for the annual award and I know I can always rely on members of the Editorial Board to help out when no reviewers can be found quickly enough. A big Thank You to you all.

Now is also the time to say Thank You to Maggie Couvillion, who has decided it is time to focus on matters other than being the Reviews Editor. Maggie has been a wonderful supporter of the journal and I am sure she will continue to be as author and (I hope) occasional reviewer. And so it is my great pleasure to introduce you to Chris Reid, who is our new Reviews Editor. Chris will introduce himself below.

I would like to close by announcing two exciting special issues we are working on:

‘Sociable arthropods: broadening conceptions about social insects’, guest edited by Joel Meunier, Miriam Richards and Javier Quezada Euan.

‘Successes and challenges in social insect conservation’, guest edited by Parry Kietzman

Both are open for submissions and anyone interested can contact the guest editors. More information can be found here: <https://www.springer.com/journal/40/updates>

I look forward to seeing both special issues come to fruition.

## **Hello from Chris Reid, our new Reviews Editor**

Hello, my name is Chris R. Reid and I am very excited to join the team at *Insectes Sociaux* as Reviews Editor. I have been an avid member of the Society since commencing my PhD in 2009, and have felt a strong connection with the IUSSI community since giving my first ever conference presentation at the Copenhagen meeting in 2010. It is a privilege to be able to contribute to the Society as the new Reviews Editor.

I study the collective behaviour of natural complex systems. Complex systems are anything consisting of many individual units, each acting on its own, with no centralised control of the collective. The thousands of tiny interactions between the individuals leads to sophisticated ‘emergent’ behaviour at the group level, such as solving mazes and trade-offs, seemingly

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telepathic group movements or self-assembled structures. I design new experiments in the lab and the field to figure out the mechanisms and simple behavioural rules that individuals use to gain the benefits of emergent collective behaviour. I then work with computer scientists and engineers to find ways we can implement these new bio-inspired rules in human systems.

I am an Australian Research Council Future Fellow at Macquarie University in Sydney, Australia. I have worked with honey bees, fish schools and swarms of robots, but my main study organisms are ant colonies (of many species, currently focussing on the weaver ant *Oecophylla smaragdina*), as well as the slime mould *Physarum polycephalum*.

# News from the XX International Congress

Judith Korb, President of the IUSSI

We would like to invite you to the 20<sup>th</sup> International Congress of the IUSSI to Freiburg (Germany). It will be held from the 16<sup>th</sup> to the 20<sup>th</sup> of August, 2026.

Freiburg is a University City with around 230 000 inhabitants, known for its beautiful old town. It is located next to the Rhine valley in the southwestern part of Germany, next to the border of France and Switzerland. By plane, it can be reached via the Frankfurt International Airport or the Euro Airport Basel/Mulhouse/Freiburg with direct train connections to Freiburg.

Freiburg is one of the sunniest cities in Germany with a green ethos, surrounded by the nature of the Black Forest and the Rhine valley with its many vineyards. More information will be circulated later this year.

We are looking forward to welcoming you!

Judith Korb (on behalf of the organizing committee)

# News from the next European IUSSI Meeting

Cleo Bertelsmeier, President of the French Section of the IUSSI

Dear social insect lovers, dear friends and colleagues,

We are excited to host the European meeting of the International Union for the Study of Social Insects (IUSSI) in Lausanne, Switzerland, 07-11 July 2024.

The meeting will bring together researchers working on a diverse range of topics including (but not limited to) reproductive strategies, collective behaviour, division of labour, neuroethology, social genetics and genomics, disease and immunity, chemical ecology, morphology and systematics, evolution, biodiversity, community ecology and biogeography of social insects in a stimulating and friendly atmosphere.

We will be hosted by the University of Lausanne, which is ideally located next to the lake of Geneva, with some sandy beaches and many cafes and summer bars installed along the lakeside. In July, the weather is usually sunny and temperatures around 25C, allowing you to enjoy swimming in the lake. The famous UNESCO-heritage Lavaux vineyards are close by, and the mountains (Alps and Jura mountains) can be reached within less than one hour.

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The meeting will include three and a half days for scientific sessions, plenaries and posters, a half day for excursions in our region, a welcome reception, and a banquet on the final evening.

Symposium submissions are open now (see the website link below).

We are also looking for suggestions if anyone is interested in organizing a « topic group » at the Meeting (i.e., an informal gathering with some drinks, to discuss with like-minded people about a specific topic).

The website is online now: <https://wp.unil.ch/iussi-europe-2024/>

On behalf of the organizing committee, I invite you to join us in Lausanne in 2024 and help us make this meeting amazing.

Cleo Bertelsmeier

# News from the Archives

Christopher Starr, IUSSI Archivist

Madeleine Beekman, our past Secretary-General, highlighted the new “Encyclopedia of Social Insects”, a labour of love and project of the IUSSI led by Chris Starr, at our Congress in San Diego. This amazing book was published by Springer in 2021. It is an incredible resource for all students of social insects, and we’d like to use this newsletter to share the contents and details with you. Anyone interested in the contents can either contact section authors for a copy of their contribution (emails below), or buy the book to get the whole thing! Alternatively, please encourage your university libraries to purchase the book, if you can. [Please note, content above plagiarised by Mark from emails with Chris]

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## *ENCYCLOPEDIA OF SOCIAL INSECTS*

A project of the International Union for the Study of Social Insects (IUSSI)  
Christopher K. Starr, editor  
Cham, Switzerland: Springer 2021

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[laurent.lehmann@unil.ch](mailto:laurent.lehmann@unil.ch) [laurent.keller@unil.ch](mailto:laurent.keller@unil.ch) ... 542-546

large carpenter bees (*Xylocopa*) -- Stephen L. Buchmann & Robert L. Minckley  
[buchmann.stephen@gmail.com](mailto:buchmann.stephen@gmail.com) [robert.minckley@rochester.edu](mailto:robert.minckley@rochester.edu) ... 547-550

*Lasioglossum* -- Miriam H. Richards & Laurence Packer [mrichards@brocku.ca](mailto:mrichards@brocku.ca)  
[xeromelissa@gmail.com](mailto:xeromelissa@gmail.com) ... 550-554

*Lasius* -- Martin Quque & Olivier Bles [martin.quque@iphc.cnrs.fr](mailto:martin.quque@iphc.cnrs.fr)  
[olivier.bles@ulb.ac.be](mailto:olivier.bles@ulb.ac.be) ... 555-558

Leptanillinae -- Keiichi Masuko [wb5k-msk@asahi-net.or.jp](mailto:wb5k-msk@asahi-net.or.jp) ... 558-560

*Leptogenys* -- Philipp Hoenle [philipp.hoenle92@gmail.com](mailto:philipp.hoenle92@gmail.com) ... 560-564

*Leptothorax* -- Jürgen Heinze [juergen.heinze@ur.de](mailto:juergen.heinze@ur.de) ... 564-566

*Linepithema* -- Alex Wild [alwild@myrmecos.net](mailto:alwild@myrmecos.net) ... 566-568

marauder ants (*Carebara* in part) -- Mark W. Moffett [mark@doctorbugs.com](mailto:mark@doctorbugs.com) ... 569-576

*Mastotermes darwiniensis* -- Nathan Lo [nathan.lo@sydney.edu.au](mailto:nathan.lo@sydney.edu.au) ... 576-578

Matabele ant (*Megaponera analis*) -- Erik Frank [erik.frank@unil.ch](mailto:erik.frank@unil.ch) ... 578-584

*Megalopta* -- Adam Smith [adam\\_smith@gwu.edu](mailto:adam_smith@gwu.edu) ... 584-587

Meliponiculture -- Javier Quezada-Euán & Denise de Araujo Alves  
[javier.quezada@correo.uady.mx](mailto:javier.quezada@correo.uady.mx) [daalves@usp.br](mailto:daalves@usp.br) ... 587-592

*Mischocyttarus* -- Sean O'Donnell [so356@drexel.edu](mailto:so356@drexel.edu) ... 593-598

*Monomorium* -- Luigi Pontieri & Timothy A. Linksvayer [lpontieri@bio.ku.dk](mailto:lpontieri@bio.ku.dk)  
[tlinks@sas.upenn.edu](mailto:tlinks@sas.upenn.edu) ... 599-604

myrmeciine ants -- Robert W. Taylor [bob.taylor@home.com.au](mailto:bob.taylor@home.com.au) ... 604-609

myrmecomorphy -- Fadia Sara Ceccarelli & Paula E. Cushing [saracecca@hotmail.com](mailto:saracecca@hotmail.com)  
[paula.cushing@dmns.org](mailto:paula.cushing@dmns.org) ... 609-612

nasute termites (Nasutitermitinae) -- Reginaldo Constantino [constant@unb.br](mailto:constant@unb.br) ... 613-616

nectar -- Susan W. Nicolson [swnicolson@zoology.up.ac.za](mailto:swnicolson@zoology.up.ac.za) ... 616-619

nest homeostasis -- Samuel N. Beshers [beshers@illinois.edu](mailto:beshers@illinois.edu) ... 620-621

nest relocation -- Sarah E. Bengston & Terry McGlynn [sbengsto@gmail.com](mailto:sbengsto@gmail.com)  
[terry.mcglynn@gmail.com](mailto:terry.mcglynn@gmail.com) ... 621-626

nest structure: honey bees -- Michael Smith [smithleemichael@gmail.com](mailto:smithleemichael@gmail.com) ... 626-632

nest structure: social wasps -- John. W. Wenzel [WenzelJ@carnegiemnh.org](mailto:WenzelJ@carnegiemnh.org) ... 632-646

nest structure: stingless bees -- David W. Roubik [roubikd@si.edu](mailto:roubikd@si.edu) ... 646-651

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nonflying reproductives in ants -- Christian Peeters [christian.peeters@upmc.fr](mailto:christian.peeters@upmc.fr) ... 668-670

nutrition in social insects -- Stéphane Kraus, Tamara Gómez-Moracho & Mathieu Lihoreau [kraus.stephane.05@gmail.com](mailto:kraus.stephane.05@gmail.com) [tamara.gomez@univ-tlse3.fr](mailto:tamara.gomez@univ-tlse3.fr)  
[mathieu.lihoreau@univ-tlse3.fr](mailto:mathieu.lihoreau@univ-tlse3.fr) ... 670-675

optimal foraging -- Graham Pyke & Christopher K Starr [Graham.Pyke@mq.edu.au](mailto:Graham.Pyke@mq.edu.au)  
[ckstarr@gmail.com](mailto:ckstarr@gmail.com) ... 677-685

orchid bees (Euglossini) -- Luiz R. R. Faria & Gabriel A.R. Melo [nunofariajr@gmail.com](mailto:nunofariajr@gmail.com) [garmelo@ufpr.br](mailto:garmelo@ufpr.br) ... 685-690

orientation by central-place foragers -- Ajay Narendra [ajay.narendra@mq.edu.au](mailto:ajay.narendra@mq.edu.au) ... 690-695

paper wasps (*Polistes*) -- Seirian Sumner & Alessandro Cini [seirian.sumner@gmail.com](mailto:seirian.sumner@gmail.com) ... 697-709

*Parapolybia* -- Sô. Yamane [yamane\\_soichi@ybb.ne.jp](mailto:yamane_soichi@ybb.ne.jp) ... 709-713

parasites and pathogens -- Paul Schmid-Hempel & Sylvia Cremer [paul.schmid-hempel@env.ethz.ch](mailto:paul.schmid-hempel@env.ethz.ch) [Sylvia.Cremer@ist.ac.at](mailto:Sylvia.Cremer@ist.ac.at) ... 713-723

parthenogenesis -- Claudie Doums [claudie.doums@ephe.sorbonne.fr](mailto:claudie.doums@ephe.sorbonne.fr) ... 723-728

*Pheidole* -- Alexandre C. Ferreira [alexandreferreira@gmail.com](mailto:alexandreferreira@gmail.com) ... 728-731

*Platythyrea* -- Abel Bernadou [Abel.Bernadou@ur.de](mailto:Abel.Bernadou@ur.de) ... 732-736

pollination and agriculture -- Peter Kevan & Patrícia N. Silva [pkevan@uoguelph.ca](mailto:pkevan@uoguelph.ca)

[patriciabiene@gmail.com](mailto:patriciabiene@gmail.com) ... 736-745

polydomy (polycaly) -- Liselotte Sundström [liselotte.sundstrom@helsinki.fi](mailto:liselotte.sundstrom@helsinki.fi) ... 745-749

poneroid ants -- Roberto Keller & Christian Peeters [christian.peeters@upmc.fr](mailto:christian.peeters@upmc.fr)  
[roberto.kellerperez@gmail.com](mailto:roberto.kellerperez@gmail.com) ... 749-754

presocial insects -- James T. Costa [costa@email.wcu.edu](mailto:costa@email.wcu.edu) ... 754-761

propolis -- Marla Spivak & Michael Simone-Finstrom [spiva001@umn.edu](mailto:spiva001@umn.edu)  
[Michael.SimoneFinstrom@usda.gov](mailto:Michael.SimoneFinstrom@usda.gov) ... 761-763

Pseudomyrmecinae -- Philip S. Ward [psward@ucdavis.edu](mailto:psward@ucdavis.edu) ... 763-766

*Rhytidoponera* -- Robert Taylor [bob.taylor@homeemail.com.au](mailto:bob.taylor@homeemail.com.au) ... 767-771

*Ropalidia* -- Raghavendra Gadagkar [ragh@iisc.ac.in](mailto:ragh@iisc.ac.in) ... 771-781

seed dispersal by ants (myrmecochory) -- Adam Devenish & Crisanto Gómez  
[ajm.devenish@googlemail.com](mailto:ajm.devenish@googlemail.com) ... 783-788

seed-harvesting ants -- Blaine J. Cole & Diane C. Wiernasz [bcole@uh.edu](mailto:bcole@uh.edu)  
[dwiernasz@uh.edu](mailto:dwiernasz@uh.edu) ... 788-793

self-organization and stigmergy -- Bertrand Collignon & Claire Detrain  
[cdetrain@ulb.ac.be](mailto:cdetrain@ulb.ac.be) [bcollign@gmail.com](mailto:bcollign@gmail.com) ... 793-803

sexual selection in social insects -- Boris Baer [boris.bar@ucr.edu](mailto:boris.bar@ucr.edu) ... 803-807

slave making in ants (dulosis) - Marah Stoldt & Susanne Foitzik [mastoldt@uni-mainz.de](mailto:mastoldt@uni-mainz.de)  
[foitzik@uni-mainz.de](mailto:foitzik@uni-mainz.de) ... 807-814

small carpenter bees (*Ceratina*) -- Sandra M. Rehan [sandra.rehan@gmail.com](mailto:sandra.rehan@gmail.com) ... 814-817

social aphids -- Shigeyuki Aoki & Utako Kurosu [oregma@rb3.so-net.ne.jp](mailto:oregma@rb3.so-net.ne.jp)  
[ukurosu@tamacc.chuo-u.ac.jp](mailto:ukurosu@tamacc.chuo-u.ac.jp) ... 817-824

social apoid wasps -- Gabriel A.R. Melo [garmelo@ufpr.br](mailto:garmelo@ufpr.br) ... 825-828

social beetles -- Peter H.W. Biedermann & Jon Andreja Nuotclà  
[peter.biedermann@uni-wuerzburg.de](mailto:peter.biedermann@uni-wuerzburg.de) [jon.nuotcla@iee.unibe.ch](mailto:jon.nuotcla@iee.unibe.ch) ... 828-836

social parasitism -- Christian Rabeling [christian.rabeling@asu.edu](mailto:christian.rabeling@asu.edu) ... 836-858

social spiders -- Leticia Avilés [laviles.ubczool@gmail.com](mailto:laviles.ubczool@gmail.com) ... 858-868

social stomach -- István Karsai & Thomas Schmickl [karsai@etsu.edu](mailto:karsai@etsu.edu)  
[thomas.schmickl@uni-graz.at](mailto:thomas.schmickl@uni-graz.at) ... 868-871

sperm competition -- Boris Baer [boris.bar@ucr.edu](mailto:boris.bar@ucr.edu) ... 872-875

spiny ants (*Polyrhachis*) -- Simon Robson [simon.robson@sydney.edu.au](mailto:simon.robson@sydney.edu.au) ... 875-881

sting autotomy -- Christopher K. Starr & Carlos E. Sarmiento [ckstarr@gmail.com](mailto:ckstarr@gmail.com)  
[cesarmientom@unal.edu.co](mailto:cesarmientom@unal.edu.co) ... 881-883

stingless bees (Meliponini) - - Gabriel A.R. Melo [garmelo@ufpr.br](mailto:garmelo@ufpr.br) ... 883-900

Stylotermitidae -- Hou-Feng Li [houfeng@dragon.nchu.edu.tw](mailto:houfeng@dragon.nchu.edu.tw) ... 900-901

subterranean ants -- Mark Wong & Benoit Guénard  
[markwong.research@outlook.com](mailto:markwong.research@outlook.com) [zeroben@gmail.com](mailto:zeroben@gmail.com) ... 901-906

subterranean termites (Rhinotermitidae) -- Anne-Geneviève Bagnères & Edward Vargo  
[ag.bagneres@cefe.cnrs.fr](mailto:ag.bagneres@cefe.cnrs.fr) [ed.vargo@tamu.edu](mailto:ed.vargo@tamu.edu) ... 906-910

supercolonies of ants -- Heikki Helanterä [heikki.helantera@helsinki.fi](mailto:heikki.helantera@helsinki.fi) ... 911-913

superorganism concept -- Christopher K. Starr [ckstarr@gmail.com](mailto:ckstarr@gmail.com) ... 913-918

swarm-founding wasps -- Robert L. Jeanne [rljeanne@wisc.edu](mailto:rljeanne@wisc.edu) ... 918-934

sweat bees (Halictidae) -- Miriam H. Richards & Laurence Packer  
[mrichards@brocku.ca](mailto:mrichards@brocku.ca) [xeromelissa@gmail.com](mailto:xeromelissa@gmail.com) ... 934-942

*Temnothorax* -- Sarah Bengston, Daniel Charbonneau & Anna Dornhaus  
[sbengsto@gmail.com](mailto:sbengsto@gmail.com) [charbonneau.daniel@gmail.com](mailto:charbonneau.daniel@gmail.com) [dornhaus@email.arizona.edu](mailto:dornhaus@email.arizona.edu)  
... 943-947

termite feeding syndromes -- Yves Roisin [yroisin@ulb.ac.be](mailto:yroisin@ulb.ac.be) ... 947-952

termites -- Judith Korb [judith.korb@biologie.uni-freiburg.de](mailto:judith.korb@biologie.uni-freiburg.de) ... 952-960

termites as structural pests -- Nan-Yao Su [nysu@ufl.edu](mailto:nysu@ufl.edu) ... 960-963

termites: phylogeny and classification -- Thomas Bourguignon  
[thomas.bourguignon@oist.jp](mailto:thomas.bourguignon@oist.jp) ... 963-968

tramp ants -- Scotty Yang & DeWayne D. Shoemaker [ccyang@rish.kyoto-u.ac.jp](mailto:ccyang@rish.kyoto-u.ac.jp)  
[dshoema2@tennessee.edu](mailto:dshoema2@tennessee.edu) [dewayne.shoemaker@utk.edu](mailto:dewayne.shoemaker@utk.edu) ... 969-972

trophallaxis -- Adria C. Leboeuf [adrialeboeuf@gmail.com](mailto:adrialeboeuf@gmail.com) ... 972-976

turtle ants (*Cephalotes*) -- Scott Powell [scottpowell@email.gwu.edu](mailto:scottpowell@email.gwu.edu) ... 977-982

urban social insects -- Clint Penick [clintpenick@gmail.com](mailto:clintpenick@gmail.com) ... 983-988

venom - Justin O. Schmidt [ponerine@dakotacom.net](mailto:ponerine@dakotacom.net) ... 989-999

Vespinae -- Sôichi Yamane & Seiki Yamane [yamane\\_soichi@ybb.ne.jp](mailto:yamane_soichi@ybb.ne.jp)  
[mayiopa0@gmail.com](mailto:mayiopa0@gmail.com) ... 1000-1008

weaver ants (*Oecophylla*) -- Joachim Offenberg [joaf@bios.au.dk](mailto:joaf@bios.au.dk) ... 1009-1021

western honey bee (*Apis mellifera*) -- Rachael Bonoan & Philip T. Starks  
[Rachael.Bonoan@tufts.edu](mailto:Rachael.Bonoan@tufts.edu) [philip.starks@tufts.edu](mailto:philip.starks@tufts.edu) ... 1021-1027

wood ants (*Formica rufa* species-group) -- Elva J.H. Robinson & Jenni Stockan  
[ejhr500@yccsa.org](mailto:ejhr500@yccsa.org) [jenni.stockan@hutton.ac.uk](mailto:jenni.stockan@hutton.ac.uk) ... 1028-1036

wood-feeding cockroaches of the genus *Cryptocercus* -- Christine A. Nalepa  
[cnalepa@ncsu.edu](mailto:cnalepa@ncsu.edu) ... 1035-1040

worker policing -- Tom Wenseleers, Cintia Akemi Oi & Ricardo Caliari Oliveira  
[tom.wenseleers@bio.kuleuven.be](mailto:tom.wenseleers@bio.kuleuven.be) [cintiaakemi.oi@kuleuven.be](mailto:cintiaakemi.oi@kuleuven.be)  
[ricardo.caliarioliveira@kuleuven.be](mailto:ricardo.caliarioliveira@kuleuven.be) ... 1040-1047

worker polymorphism: ants -- Mathieu Molet [mathieu.molet@upmc.fr](mailto:mathieu.molet@upmc.fr)  
[mathieu.molet@gmail.com](mailto:mathieu.molet@gmail.com) [mathieu.molet@sorbonne-universite.fr](mailto:mathieu.molet@sorbonne-universite.fr) ... 1047-1049