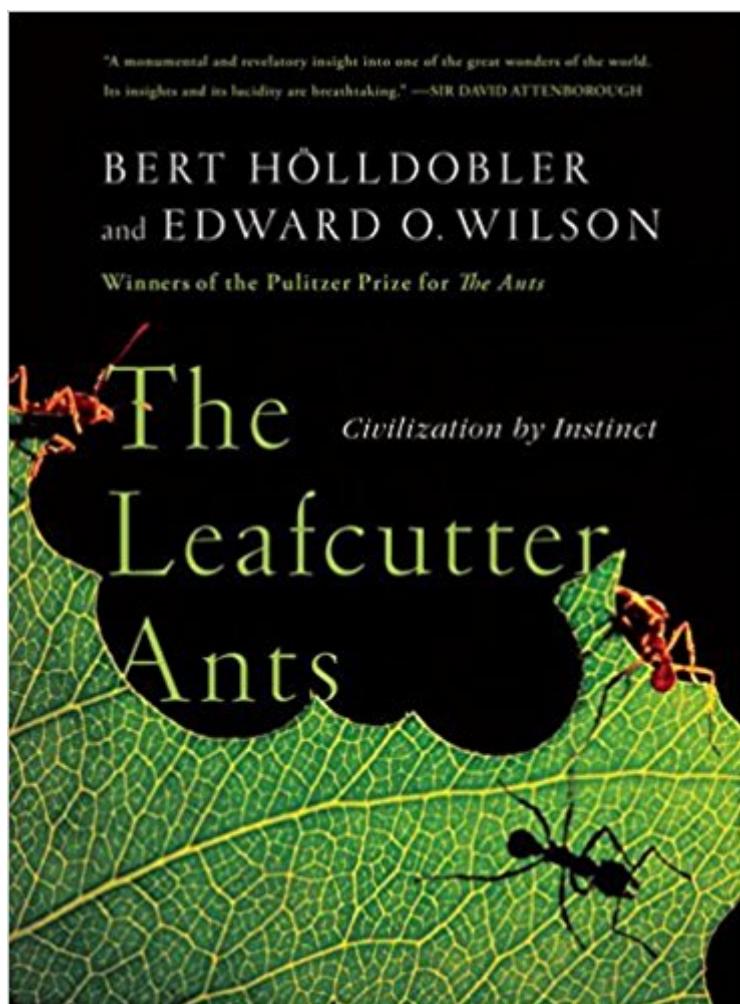


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The Leafcutter Ants: Civilization By Instinct



Synopsis

From the Pulitzer Prize-winning authors of *The Ants* comes this dynamic and visually spectacular portrait of Earth's ultimate superorganism. *The Leafcutter Ants* is the most detailed and authoritative description of any ant species ever produced. With a text suitable for both a lay and a scientific audience, the book provides an unforgettable tour of Earth's most evolved animal societies. Each colony of leafcutters contains as many as five million workers, all the daughters of a single queen that can live over a decade. A gigantic nest can stretch thirty feet across, rise five feet or more above the ground, and consist of hundreds of chambers that reach twenty-five feet below the ground surface. Indeed, the leafcutters have parlayed their instinctive civilization into a virtual domination of forest, grassland, and cropland—*from Louisiana to Patagonia*. Inspired by a section of the authors' acclaimed *The Superorganism*, this brilliantly illustrated work provides the ultimate explanation of what a social order with a half-billion years of animal evolution has achieved.

Four-color throughout, 56 photographs

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Leafcutter ants are familiar to all who watch nature shows about the tropics, or those who live in rural Texas and Louisiana. These are the ants busily running in columns on trails they keep free of debris and vegetation, carrying freshly cut sections of leaves and flower petals over their heads like parasols. If one followed the ants to their nest, one would discover an immense network of tunnels, the majority of which are an underground garden in which the ants grow their food—fungus

planted onto a substrate of chewed plant material previously brought by the ants. In this new look at the leafcutter ants, Pulitzer Prize winners HÃfÃ¶lldobler (with Wilson for *The Ants*, 1990) and Wilson (*On Human Nature*, 1978) introduce the general reader to earth's most evolved animal society. With the colony's queen as its reproductive organ; the various ages and types of workers as the brain, heart, and other organs; and the communication among the ants similar to the communication of nerves and ganglia, a leafcutter ant colony can be truly considered as a superorganism. --Nancy Bent

Bert HÃfÃ¶lldobler is Foundation Professor at Arizona State University and the recipient of numerous awards, including the Pulitzer Prize and the Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz Prize. He lives in Arizona and Germany. Edward O. Wilson is widely recognized as one of the world's preeminent biologists and naturalists. The author of more than thirty books, including *The Social Conquest of Earth*, *The Meaning of Human Existence*, and *Letters to a Young Scientist*, Wilson is a professor emeritus at Harvard University. The winner of two Pulitzer Prizes, he lives with his wife, Irene Wilson, in Lexington, Massachusetts.

Pretty technical. Slogging through. Good info.

I'm not a scientist but I am curious, in this case about ants and their social behavior. This one statement, one of many, blew me away: The volatile recruitment component of some *Atta* species was the first ant trail pheromone whose chemical structure was identified, called MMPC for short. The potency of MMPC is quite amazing: 1 milligram of this substance is theoretically sufficient to draw a trail that foragers of *Atta texana* and *Atta cephalotes* will follow three times around Earth's circumference and that record has recently been broken in the case of *Atta vollenweideri*: 1 milligram of this trail pheromone would be enough to lay a trail sixty times around the planet, with approximately 50 percent of the foragers of the grass-cutting ant still following. One nest covered approx. 100 acres. If you're curious about life, this book is loaded with information that will keep you satisfied.

My husband loves leafcutter ants. I can't fully understand this, but I can support it.

Two of the best authors...factual, yet readable by the general public.

Presented as a detailed case study, THE LEAFCUTTER ANTS is immediately accessible, fascinating, and informative. Bert Holldobler and E.O. Wilson bring the colony right to you, including a quite creative way of showing what a colony looks like. Imagine pumping tons of cement into a colony, letting it harden, and then digging it up to see what it looks like. Well, that's what they did, and, let me say, it is quite impressive. So much information in less than 150 pages that it is sure to please the most demanding nature enthusiast. Highly recommended... - Ic

Wonderful book . I was stunned at some of the intelligent collective behaviour displayed by ants. A must read for anyone interested in the natural world and the significant place ants occupy in it .

HÃfÃ¶ldobler and Wilson are the hands-down experts in this field. Their studies of the diversity and adaptability of ant and other insect colonies really challenge ideas of human intelligence as necessary to evolving civilization. Very useful for a student of autopoietic organization in living systems.

This was very interesting. I have wanted to read E.O. Wilson's Ant study for years but could never afford to buy it. This was the poor man's version but one learned a lot. Well written.

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