

CAN THE HUNS OF THE INSECT WORLD SAVE A VILLAGE FROM TERMITE ATTACK? NOVA SHOWCASES A STUNNING, NATURE DOCUMENTARY



Master of the Killer Ants

Tuesday, November 20 at 8pm ET/PT on PBS
pbs.org/nova/ants



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Deep within a termite mound in Africa, soldier termites spring into action, slicing their smaller opponents in half with a snap of their powerful jaws. But the attacking army ants use strategy to overwhelm the defenders. Little do these six-legged combatants know that their marching orders come from a drought-plagued human village that is counting on them to drive out the termites. NOVA records astonishing scenes of nature's struggle on ***Master of the Killer Ants***, airing Tuesday, November 20 at 8pm ET/PT on PBS (check local listings).

Filmed in High Definition with stunning macro-shooting techniques, the film gives viewers a rare and fascinating up-close look at this teeming micro-world. The spectacular footage includes different castes of termites coursing through their intricate tunnels—and the monstrosity egg-swollen queen herself, rippling with the contractions that deposit thousands of eggs per day. The climax comes as the invading army ants close in on the queen's royal cell.

Although known for their ruthless aggression, army ants also have a beneficial side, traditionally exploited by the Mofu people of northern Cameroon, who call the local species of red army ants *jaglavak*.

Master of the Killer Ants tells the story of the Mofu's intimate relationship with jaglavak and other insects. For example, the people know that a crab-like, bright red insect serves as a harbinger of rain and a sign that it is time to prepare the earth. Winged insects and grasshoppers make a valuable food supplement and are especially tasty when grilled.

But the insects provide a guide to behavior as well as an aid to survival. The Mofu say that they must work as hard and selflessly as the ants and termites if they are to survive, and they attribute drought and misfortune to their moral shortcomings.

One special quality of jaglavak above all concerns the village elder Matsgrawaï. When the film opens, he is called to inspect a neighbor's house. Termites have infested the earthen floor and are attacking the walls and roof. Worst of all, they threaten the adjacent granary with its crucial stock of grain sorghum.

From past experience, Matsgrawaï knows that jaglavak can drive the termites away, thereby securing the grain sorghum stores on which the villagers' lives depend. Under special circumstances, army ants will attack termite colonies, and Matsgrawaï begins with prayers and offerings to jaglavak. When the ants fail to show up, he sends children to seek them out.

Thus commences a charming, instructive, thrilling true-life fable on how to fight fire with fire—termites with ants—and not get burned, or rather too badly stung, in the process.

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Now in its 34th year of broadcasting, NOVA is produced for PBS by the WGBH Science Unit at WGBH Boston. The director of the WGBH Science Unit and senior executive producer of NOVA is Paula S. Apsell. Funding for NOVA is provided by The DOW Chemical Company, David H. Koch, the Howard Hughes Medical Institute, the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, and public television viewers.

NOVA is closed captioned for deaf and hard-of-hearing viewers and described for people who are blind or visually impaired by the Media Access Group at WGBH. The descriptive narration is available on the SAP channel or stereo TVs and VCRs. **Master of the Killer Ants** will be available on DVD wherever videos are sold. To order direct from WGBH Boston Video, visit shop.wgbh.org or call 800.949.8670.

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