



Comenius meeting in Germany

From the 20th to 23rd May all Comenius partners came to visit us at our school 'Gesamtschule Hemer' in Germany. All our pupils were very excited to meet their exchange partners and to welcome them at their home.

On Wednesday we started the project meeting with an official welcoming where our school choir sang songs about living in the European Union and our Comenius project group presented a short play 'Little Red Riding Hood taking part in the Comenius project and visiting all countries'.

After that the pupils worked in workshops on the topics of insects and European culture. There was an Art workshop around the topic 'Beetle', one where 'Ant Farms' were built, a workshop on flourworms and one about European sights such as the Elisabeth Tower (Big Ben) or the Brandenburger Tor.



In the afternoon we went to the local 'Sauerland Park' where the children had another workshop with the title 'Six legs and more', where they learnt about the different animal categories and went through the park to find insects and learn about their names.

On Thursday the second project day we went to the Maximilian Park in Hamm where we had a guided tour through the 'Butterfly House'. Afterwards the children had fun playing together on one of the many playgrounds in the park.

In the evening we had a barbecue at the school with all the hosting families, children and teachers. On this occasion our school Circus presented part of their programme and the school band provided some background music. The children also showed the products of their workshops on Wednesday and got their certificates.

On our last day we went to the open air museum in Hagen where you can discover the history of handicraft and learn about manufacturing techniques and working conditions of the past. Unfortunately the weather was very bad so it was difficult to walk around. But nevertheless the children had fun together. And then we finally said goodbye. The children were very sad because they didn't have more time together but they enjoyed meeting the partner schools a lot.

Ants

Ants, in Latin called Formicidae belong to the category of the insects and are fascinating creatures which live in large colonies. Within the colony every single ant has to fulfil a special task.

Description

Like other insects ants have a chitin carapace, six legs and a body divided into three segments namely head, thorax and abdomen as well as antennae which they use for orientation.

There are lots of different kinds of ants (worldwide about 10.000 different species) as for example the Big Red Forest Ant in Europe, the Bulldog ant in Australia and lots of others on all continents. So they are also very different in colour (red, brown, black and yellow or green) and size which ranges from 0,75 to 52 mm depending on the species and their function in the colony.



Worker ants and queens develop from fertilized eggs whereas male ants arise from non-fertilized eggs. Those female ants which are fertile are the future queens. They have wings like the male ants for their nuptial flight. After their copulation they throw away their wings.

The life expectancy of ants is also very different. Some worker ants only live some months whereas others can live up to three years, queens may even live for 20 years or longer.

Habitat and behaviour

You can find ants all over the world except for the Antarctica and some other small parts. They can survive in the desert as well as in high mountain areas.

In Europe the Big Red Forest Ant is one of the most common ants. They usually live in forests or on grassland.

Ants always live in colonies and build huge anthills which consist of tunnels and chambers. To protect their nest from the cold they use brushwood and fir needles with which they cover it.



In each colony every ant has a special task. The army ants defend the nest, others search for food and the nursing ants take care of the offspring.

Ants are very strong animals because they are able to carry the thirtiethfold of their own weight. Remarkable is also their sense of orientation for which they use odors to mark their paths. Other odors are used as a warning in case of danger.

Ecological issues

Ants are very useful animals and they play an important role for the ecological balance like for example the common Forest Ant in Europe which:

- improves the fertility of the forest floor
- spreads the seeds of the local plants
- prevents the outbreak of forest pest
- is important for the hygiene in the forest by consuming rotten carcass
- is a food source for other animals such as birds, small mammals and even other insects

