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## Insects get a buzz out of co-operating

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WORKING as a team has been shown to be the best way forward for insect colonies.

Ants and bees have long been recognised as tireless workers, but now scientific studies carried out at the Universities of Edinburgh and Oxford have shown that they behave like model citizens for the greater good of the colony.

And unlike herds of  
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bison or shoals of fish, where individuals may appear to be team players but actually behave according to their own interests, ants and bees really do work for the benefit of all.

The scientists used a mathematical model to study how co-operative groups of animals, or superorganisms, evolve.

The study showed groups either acted as a unit as they all carried the same genes, and so wanted to ensure their genetic survival, or the group's behaviour was controlled by a form of policing.

Dr Andy Gardner, from the School of Biological Sciences at the University of Edinburgh, said: "We often see animals appearing to move in unison, such as bison or fish. However, what looks like a team effort is in fact each animal jostling to get to the middle of the group to evade predators.

"By contrast, an ant nest or a beehive can behave as a united organism in its own right."

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