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Making ant wings

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The ant genome can direct the formation of queens with fully functional wings or wingless soldiers and workers - a phenomenon known as wing polyphenism. In the July 12 Science, Ehab Abouheif and Gregory Wray define the genetic network underlying wing development in ant castes (*Science* 2002, **297:**249-252). They examined genes orthologous to those involved in wing-patterning networks in other organisms. Abouheif and Wray analyzed the expression patterns of six conserved genes that have been characterized in wing development in *Drosophila*and butterflies. They found some differences in expression patterns between winged queens and wingless soldiers or workers, and differences in gene expression between closely related ant species. This gene network is found to be highly conserved but evolutionarily labile, explaining its important contribution to successful ant evolution.

References

1. *Science*, [http://www.sciencemag.org]

2. Pattern formation and eyespot determination in butterfly wings.