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A bug's life ? Orwell style

LEENA SINGH - IMPRINT STAFF

Insect Cops on Duty

The life of a tree wasp is not easy. Day in and day out, they dutifully look after the queen's offspring, occasionally stopping to spit a runny meal into the mouth of a larva. However, some insects selfishly lay their own eggs in empty cells rather than taking care of the queen's eggs.

However, offenders in the insect community do not go unpunished. "Punishment among insects is meted out by ordinary workers, and sometimes the queen herself," says biologist Tom Wenseleers, of the Institute for Advanced Study in Berlin. The angry workers will grab the offender and try to sting her, while the queen destroys the laid eggs.

Biologists studying insect societies understand them as models for studying altruism, where workers look out for the common good. Wenseleers said that insects are simply "oppressed workers in a police state."

Married people are happy ? but only if your spouse is happy

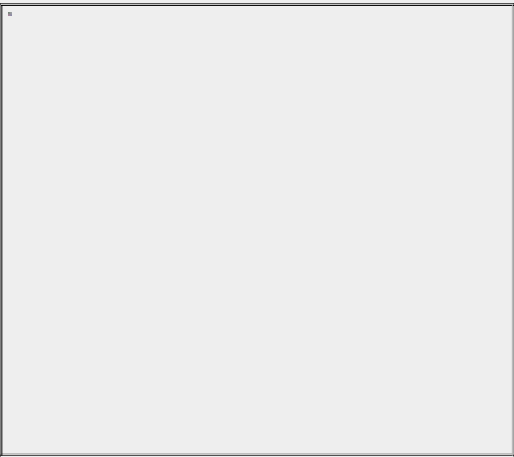
Nick Powdthavee, a researcher at the University of Warwick revealed to the Royal Economic Society's Annual Conference on Tuesday that a married person is significantly more satisfied with life if their spouse is satisfied with life. However, Powdthavee found no evidence of this among couples who prefer cohabitation to marriage.

Powdthavee came to this conclusion from analyzing life satisfaction data from the 9,704 married individuals in the British Household Panel Survey (1996-2000 and 2002). Although this information is widely assumed, it is rarely studied. Researchers found "a 30 per cent increase in the spouse's life satisfaction score from the previous year can completely offset the negative impact of unemployment on the respondent's life satisfaction." The same research conducted with cohabiting couples did not find the same evidence for life satisfaction among unmarried couples. These results lead to the assumption that married couples tend to share not only possessions but life experiences as well as happiness, more than couples who live together.

New Fingerprint Detection Technology

University of California scientists have developed a technology for detecting fingerprints known as micro-X-ray fluorescence (MXRF). Researchers believe this new technology "has the potential to help expand the use of fingerprinting as a forensic investigation tool."

MXRF detects the sodium, potassium and chlorine elements present in salts such as sodium chloride and potassium chloride, which are excreted in sweat. "The elements are detected as a function of their location on a surface, making it possible to see a fingerprint where the salts have been deposited in the patterns of fingerprints, the lines called friction ridges by forensic scientists." This new technology has the advantage over traditional fingerprint detection methods in that the suspected area does not need to be treated with powders. Adding powders or vapours to surfaces of leather, plastic or wood often make it difficult to detect fingerprints.



HITOSHI MURAKAMI