

Wasp study with sting in tail

IT is one of the most violent struggles in the natural world, with brother fighting brother in a desperate attempt to mate with a female. Now Edinburgh scientists who have studied wasps that live and breed inside fig fruit have found the disturbing evidence of the battles.

In a frantic struggle for the affections of the female wasps, the male, right, severs its rivals' heads and kills its brothers.

The surprising result of the project on the wasps that live in the Philippines and North America runs counter to the conventional

theory that family members stick together among the species.

Researchers Martyn Murray, Ashley Griffen and Stuart West from Edinburgh University teamed up with American colleagues at the Smithsonian Institute to carry out the extensive study.

Dr West said: "Figs and fig wasps have a remarkable relationship.

"Everything happens within the fig in just a couple of days as the males seek to mate with the females. It is one big incestuous orgy."

