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21 October 2014 5:45 pm



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Tuesday, October 21, 2014 - 1:45pm

Australian bee wars are exactly as awesome as they sound

In a story that sounds more like a chapter from *The Lord of the Rings* than a scientific study, [ecologists have documented a grisly war waged between rival species of stingless bees in Brisbane, Australia](#)

(<http://www.bbc.com/news/science-environment-29694513>), BBC reports. After three successive waves of invasion, the hive controlled by *Tetragonula carbonaria* was overrun by invading northerners—a *Tetragonula hockingsi* swarm. As the bees battled, they collided in midair, bit each other, and then tumbled to their mutual deaths, locked in a 12-legged embrace. The war therefore came down to a numbers game. Eventually, the defending *T. carbonaria* were simply overwhelmed; the invaders ransacked the nest, ousted the queen, and replaced her with one of their own. [A complete chronicle of the invasion](#) (<http://www.jstor.org/discover/10.1086/678399?uid=42389&uid=3739584&uid=68&uid=2&uid=3&uid=42388&uid=62&uid=3739>) can be found in *The American Naturalist*.

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