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Red Weaver Ants: a food among the tribal communities of Odisha

Red Weaver Ants are popularly known as “Kurkuti”, “Kai” and “Hau” in Odisha, which are mainly arboreal. They are used to prepare delicious food (Chatni & Pickle) and are commonly consumed with country liquor (Mahula & Handia) and fermented rice water by tribal communities. Red Weaver Ant (*Oecophylla smaragdina*) belongs to the family Formicidae. The observed host plants are *Annona squamosa*, *Combretum roxburghii*, *Mangifera indica*, *Psidium guajava*, *Shorea robusta*, *Syzygium cumini* etc. They are also used to cure



Red Weaver Ants harvested by a tribal man of Odisha

many diseases in general and particularly in respiratory problems. Local communities of Odisha state harvest them from near forest areas and also used to sell them in local weekly markets to get seasonal livelihood in the form of NTFP (Non-timber Forest Produce). Even, this ant is very useful and ecologically important having economic values, there is a lack in value addition. There is a need of more advanced scientific works for getting sustainable stability in ecological balance and providing livelihood to the local communities to reduce forest dependency.

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