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Fire ants in sea-turtle nesting areas: A distribution survey of invasive ants in Boca Raton, FL.

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The red imported fire ant, *Solenopsis invicta*, is native to South America and was introduced to Alabama in the 1930s. This predatory species rapidly spread throughout the southeastern US and parts of the West Indies, causing serious ecological and economic impacts. *Solenopsis invicta* is known to attack the eggs and hatchlings of ground nesting birds and reptiles. The ants also swarm into sea turtle nests attacking hatchlings and diminishing their chance for survival. This study is part of a larger research that aimed to survey the distribution of ants at sea turtle nesting beaches in South Florida and St. Croix, USVI. This particular study was conducted in Boca Raton, Florida. Besides providing a baseline dataset on ant species distribution in the area, this study also aimed at validating the survey methodology by finding consistency in the distribution over multiple days surveyed. The results indicate that, although more detailed surveys would produce more thorough results, we can state that the methodology is consistent in determining species distribution.