

**NOTES ON THE LEAF-CUTTING ANTS, *ATTA* SPP., OF THE
 UNITED STATES AND MEXICO**

(HYMENOPTERA: FORMICIDAE)

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This article discusses and keys the species of *Atta* that occur in the United States and Mexico, makes pertinent comments on their biology and other matters, and gives the known distribution records. A key based on major workers is presented for the identification of the species. Keys are not offered, however, for the identification of intermediate workers, females and males, since these castes are much more difficult to identify. Anyone attempting to collect or study *Atta* is urged to secure especially major workers, although it may be necessary to dig deeply into a nest to secure these individuals.

For many years the various species of *Atta* were badly confused by students of this group of ants; one was therefore reluctant to accept unquestionably all identifications or distribution records. However, it is now possible, with Borgmeier's (1959) excellent revision, to identify the various species with ease and accuracy.

Two species of *Atta* are known to occur in the United States: The common *texana* (Buckley); and *mexicana* (F. Sm.), which barely enters its southern border in Arizona. Mexico has three species: The common *mexicana*; *texana*, which occurs in at least two of its northeastern States; and *cephalotes* (L.), a Neotropical species which occurs in two of the more southern States. As far as known, Veracruz is the only State in which all three of the species have been found.

KEY TO THE SPECIES

(for the identification of major workers)

1. Each side of front of head bearing a dense clump or mass of rather long, yellowish or golden, woolly hairs; anterior end of frontal groove usually with a distinct or prominent ocellus. Southern Mexico through Central America to Bolivia and Brazil; a common and widely distributed Neotropical species **cephalotes** (L.)
- Each side of front of head not bearing a dense clump or mass of rather long, yellowish or golden, woolly hairs 2
2. Posterior portion of head (including occipital lobes and vertex) with a smooth and shiny appearance and either naked or almost free of hairs; first gastric segment similar; frontal groove of head shallow. United States (extreme southern Arizona) through Mexico to Honduras, Guatemala, and El Salvador; the most common and widely distributed species in Mexico **mexicana** (F. Sm.)
- Posterior portion of head and entire first gastric segment opaque, not naked; frontal groove of head rather strongly defined. United States (13 parishes in western Louisiana and much of the eastern part of Texas to approximately 101 degrees of longitude), and northeastern Mexico (States of Tamaulipas and Veracruz) **texana** (Buckley)