

in profile very distinctly higher than long, with convex base and flattened declivity. Body hairs sparse, normally absent from thorax. Body color more or less uniform light brown or brown. Workers, when freshly crushed, emit a stale, greasy or musty odor.

Biology and Economic Importance

Although much of the wide distribution of the Argentine ant in the United States has resulted from commercial shipments of plants and plant products, building materials, household goods, groceries, and other materials, the species has also been disseminated to a lesser degree by natural means, including heavy rains and floods. This ant's success as a competitive species can be attributed to its ability to nest in diverse types of habitats, to produce prodigious numbers of individuals because of the many reproductive females in a colony, to thrive on a wide variety of foods, to live on a friendly intercolony basis with its own species, and to exterminate other species of ants. It is an arch enemy of the Southern fire ant, *Solenopsis aryloni* McCook, a species with which it has to compete for both space and food. It nests in exposed soil and soil under cover, and also occurs in rotten wood, faulty places in trees, refuse piles, bird nests, bee hives, and other places.

Males and winged females are normally produced in the spring, usually in April or May. Since nuptial flights are seldom if ever witnessed, it is assumed that most mating takes place in the nest. In regard to the nuptial flights, Skaife writes as follows concerning this ant at the Cape in South Africa: "There is no nuptial flight at all in the case of the Argentine ant. I have never seen even the semblance of a nuptial flight during the many years I have kept this species under observation. What happens at the Cape is this: On hot, still nights after midsummer, particularly if rain is threatening, winged males leave the nests. They often come to lights at this time, but no females are to be seen among them. I have never come across a winged female outside the nest. The young queens stay at home, and there they are sought out by the males, from other nests as well as their own, and there the mating takes place." New colonies apparently are formed by one or more fertile females, migrating from the mother colony accompanied by a group of workers. The female seems unable to raise her brood alone. In winter especially, several colonies may combine to form larger colonies in favorable nesting sites. In early spring or summer the large winter colonies may divide into a number of smaller colonies or units. Workers are predaceous, carnivorous, and granivorous. They feed on the secretions of the floral and extrafloral parts of certain plants, gnaw into the buds of some fruit trees such as citrus, or even into ripened fruits such as figs. Workers tend and foster injurious honeydew-excreting insects such as plant lice, scales, and mealybugs; the resulting damage is severe in citrus groves and sugarcane plantations. The number of individuals present in an area where this ant is well established is beyond comprehension. The very active workers get into every conceivable place both in and out of doors. They exterminate all native ants except a few small, nonaggressive species. The Argentine ant becomes the one dominant form in an area infested by it. Large files of workers can be seen running up and down trees,