



Figure 29.—*Iridomyrmex pruinosus* (Roger), lateral view of worker.

tinguished from *humilis* by shape of head, difference in mandibular dentition, presence of erect hairs on thorax, stouter and more densely pubescent body, and by the odor of fresh specimens, which is like rotten coconut in *pruinosus* and a stale musty or greasy odor in *humilis*.

Biology and Economic Importance

The ants seem to prefer open habitats such as fields, meadows, pastures, and entirely bare areas, and will also nest in open woods out of dense and prolonged shade. Nests are constructed in exposed soil or soil under the cover of stones, other objects, and under the bark of logs and stumps. Entrance holes of nests in the soil commonly have crater-shaped mounds of earth surrounding them, but the craters may be imperfectly shaped, or the ground may be more or less bare. Colonies are small to moderate-sized. Males and winged females have been observed in Florida from May into July. Workers are very fond of honeydew, and tend honeydew-excreting insects; they also live on both live and dead insects. The very agile, fast-moving workers form pronounced foraging trails. M. S. Blum, in a letter to the author, wrote that the ants lay down on their foraging trails a methyl-n-amyl ketone substance, which is emitted from the gaster. Workers have been induced to follow artificial trails on which this synthetic chemical has been placed. The odor emitted by live or freshly killed workers has been likened to that of rotten coconuts and is similar to the odor of ants of the genus *Tapinoma*.

This species is a house pest particularly in the Gulf Coast States. Most frequently the ants invade houses from outdoors, but it is quite likely that they may nest within houses as well. Although workers feed on most of the foods commonly eaten by ants, they seem to show a preference for sweets. This ant may be an intermediate host of the poultry tapeworm *Raillietina tetragona* (Molin), since worker ants have been seen carrying gravid segments of the tapeworm into their nests.

References: Wheeler, 1905b, p. 389; Dennis, 1938, pp. 271-272, 294; Cole, 1940, pp. 64-65; Case and Ackert, 1940, pp. 393-395; Hess, 1958, pp. 43-45, 55-60, 62-64; Van Pelt, 1958, p. 39.