

Biology and Economic Importance

Nests are constructed in the soil, usually in open sunny places such as meadows, pastures, sandy or bare areas; seldom under objects. The typical nest has a single opening leading by a gallery to a chamber which is usually near the surface of the soil. The excavated earth is thrown up around the central nest opening in a circular crater, usually about 2 to 4 inches or larger in diameter. Sometimes it is a semi-circular or irregular mass, or it is not present at all. The ants nest in various types of soils such as sand, loam, clay, or limestone chalk. Nests are frequently built in, or very near, the nests of other ants, such as the harvesting ants *Pogonomyrma occidentalis* and *P. barbatus*. Colonies are small to moderate-sized, containing up to only a few thousand individuals. In Mississippi, male and female pupae have been observed in nests in late May. Observations indicate that in some nests, males and females can pass the winter in the adult stage. Workers are agile and fast-moving, and forage in conspicuous files. They are highly carnivorous and predacious, but they are exceedingly fond of honeydew, and tend insects excreting this substance. I have witnessed them attacking larvae of the corn earworm *Heliothis zea* (Boddie). Another observer has seen them attacking workers of the fire ant *Solenopsis geminata*. *D. pyramicus* is economically important because of its house-infesting habits, and the numerous and ugly mounds it builds on lawns. Workers commonly invade houses from outdoors. They feed on a wide variety of human foods but seem to show a preference for sweets. I have received unverified reports of these ants biting children.

References: Smith, 1936, pp. 864-865; Cole, 1940, pp. 30, 61-62; Mallis, 1941, p. 76; Hess, 1958, pp. 40-42, 55-59, 62-64.

Tapinoma sessile (Say)

Odorous house ant. A native species, which ranges from Canada through the entire United States and into Mexico. In some of our States, the ants may be absent from desert areas.

Taxonomic Characters

Subfamily and generic characters: Monomorphic. Antenna 12-segmented, without club. Antennal fossa touching posterior border of clypeus. Eye located well toward median line of head. Middle of anterior border of clypeus emarginate. Mandible with two apical teeth followed by a number of smaller teeth or denticulae. Promesonotal and mesoepinotal sutures distinct, the latter very pronounced. Flattened and sloping declivity of epinotum very distinctly longer than base of epinotum. Abdominal pedicel a single segment, the petiole. Petiolar node vestigial, strongly flattened or inclined, concealed from above by base of gaster. Cloacal orifice ventral, transverse, slit-shaped, not surrounded by a fringe of hairs (fig. 31, *co*). Sting lacking. Anal glands present, which produce a characteristic disagreeable, rotten-coconutlike odor. Suberect or erect hairs very sparse on body, absent from thorax. Integument soft, flexible. *Specific characters:* Workers 2.4-3.25 mm. long. A prominent suberect