

Biology and Economic Importance

This unusually small ant is highly adaptable in its nesting habits. It is found in the soil, rotten wood, decayed parts of trees or under the bark, in plant cavities, houses, and greenhouses. Colonies may be moderate to large in size; they contain numerous reproductive females. The members of different colonies are not antagonistic to each other. New colonies probably are formed by the migration of one or more reproductive females accompanied by a number of workers. It is not definitely known whether the ants may also establish new colonies by means of nuptial flights. Workers have a habit of running rapidly and erratically. They can emit an odor like that of rotten coconuts ("*Tapinoma*-like"). Workers are very fond of honeydew and tend honeydew-excreting insects for this substance. They also feed on both dead and live insects.

Pimentel has shown that in Puerto Rico, worker ants destroy eggs and first-stage larvae of the housefly *Musca domestica* (Linnaeus). There, the ants are known locally as albaricoque, and in Cuba as hormiga bottegaria. In Cuba, the ants are known to disseminate the grass root mealybug *Ripersia raditicola* Morrison, on the roots of sugarcane. The species is important as a house pest. Not only can the ants invade houses from outside, but can nest within the house as well. Although the ants feed upon many household foods, they seem to show a preference for sweets, having been observed feeding on sugar, cakes, and fountain syrup.

References: Wheeler, 1919a, pp. 275-276; Wheeler, 1926, pp. 154, 156; Stahl and Scaramuzza, 1929, pp. 6-7; Phillips, 1934, pp. 20-21; Smith, 1936, pp. 861-862; Eidmann, 1944, p. 459; King, 1948, p. 395; Pimentel, 1955, p. 29.

Camponotus castaneus (Latreille)

This native species ranges from Iowa to New York, south to Texas and Florida. It is perhaps most abundant in the southeastern United States. Although rather widely distributed, it is relatively uncommon in many areas.

Taxonomic Characters

Subfamily and generic characters: Polymorphic. Antennal fossa not touching posterior border of clypeus. Antenna articulated at a considerable distance from posterior border of clypeus. Antenna 12-segmented, without a club; funiculus slender. Clypeus distinctly carinate. Eye well developed. Pronotum more or less flattened (best seen in profile). Abdominal pedicel composed of a single segment, the petiole. Cloacal orifice terminal, circular, surrounded by a fringe of hairs (fig. 48,co). Sting lacking. Workers capable of emitting a strong formic acid odor. *Specific characters:* Large ants, workers 7-10 mm. long. Head (mandibles excluded) as long as wide, or longer than wide. Cheeks without erect hairs. Apex of scape noticeably surpassing posterior border of head; funiculus unusually slender. Clypeus distinctly but not strongly carinate; middle of anterior border of clypeus extended forward as a lobe, its anterior border scalloped. Epinotum with indistinct boundary between base and declivity. Middle and hind tibiae each with a row of graduated bristles; no erect