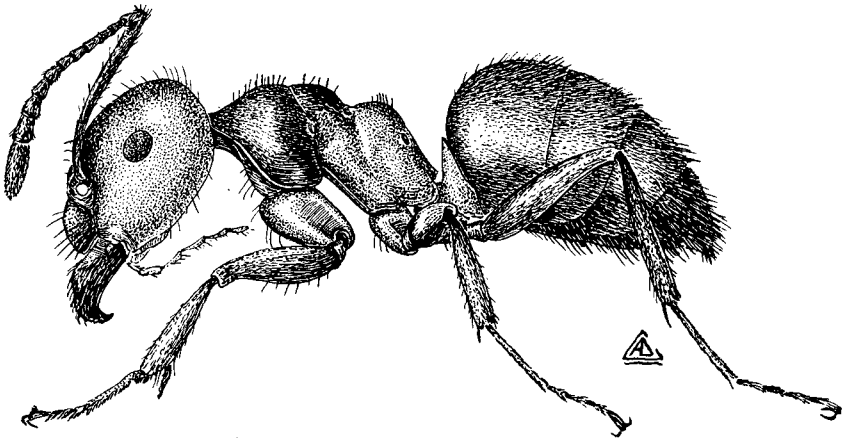

Figure 45.—*Lasius neoniger* Emery, lateral view of worker.

alienus (= *americanus* Emery). In fact, Wilson considers that the work done by Forbes and associates on *americanus* applies largely, if not entirely, to *neoniger*.

Taxonomic Characters

Subfamily and generic characters: Same as for *alienus*. *Specific characters:* Workers of approximately the same size as *alienus*, 2–2.5 mm. long. Antennal scapes and tibiae with numerous suberect or erect hairs. Anterior border of clypeal lobe obtusely angular medianly. Penultimate basal tooth of mandible markedly smaller than the two flanking teeth, or gap between penultimate and terminal basal teeth tends to be larger in area than the terminal basal tooth, and variable in shape. Color light to medium brown, rarely dark brown.

Biology and Economic Importance

Wilson states that in the eastern United States *neoniger* is frequently the dominant species of *Lasius* in lawns, cultivated fields, and grassy road strips. It is also a common ant in prairies, beaches, and sand dunes. The species nests almost exclusively in open areas, either beneath stones or in the exposed soil, where the presence of its nests is usually indicated by numerous but small craters of soil surrounding a central opening. The craters are often very abundant—sometimes as many as 10 per square yard. A nest appears to be composed of a number of shallow, interconnected chambers (seldom more than 10 to 15 inches deep), occurring over a rather large and irregular area.

To my knowledge, no careful population counts have been made, but the adult population composing a large colony must amount to thousands. Present evidence indicates that there may be not more than one reproductive queen per colony, and that queenless colonies will accept a fertilized and dealate female from a nuptial flight. Nuptial flights ordinarily take place in late afternoon of the late summer and autumn months (August to October). The flights are usually, but not always, associated with storms and rains. Flight from some colonies consist only of males; others, of a mixture of males and females.