

A Checklist of Texas Ants

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ABSTRACT — A list of 210 species of ants found in Texas is based primarily on the literature but includes 11 species and 118 county records from the authors' collection. The distribution within the state and the Vegetational Area is given for each species.

Texas is BIG, not only in jokes and stories, but also in fact, and biologists would do well to take that fact into account before undertaking any study involving its biota. A very good way to appreciate that fact is to drive across the state — 16 hours according to highway maps. A less tedious way is to study a map: roughly 700 miles north to south and 800 east to west; 10° of latitude, 13° of longitude. In area it is the largest of the 48 states; it has 1½ times the area of California, the second largest state. Any area of such size and shape is bound to exhibit biological complexity. For example, the climate ranges from continental in the Panhandle to subtropical at the southern tip and from humid along the eastern border to desert in the west.

As our starting point for this list we used Smith's 1936 checklist. To this we added every record we have found in the literature and all new records (marked with an asterisk) from our own collection. The result is 210 species based on the records of 92 bibliographic cards plus 11 additional species and 118 new county records from our own collection.

Our fieldwork has been done in 14 counties: central — Bexar, Llano, McLennan, Travis; northeastern — Cass, Fannin, Grayson, Morris; eastern — Polk, Tyler; southern — Cameron, Hidalgo; western — Brewster, Culberson. It has yielded 474 records; in addition our collection contains specimens presented to us by A. C. Cole, W. S. Creighton, J. V. Moody, and W. M. Wheeler.

HISTORICAL NOTES

Texas is of special interest to myrmecologists, because it was here that William Morton Wheeler became interested in ants.

When I took up my work at the University of Texas in the fall of 1899 as a morphologist accustomed to well-furnished northern and European embryological and anatomical laboratories and libraries, I found so little apparatus for the work in which I had been trained, that I fell into a peculiar listlessness and was for some weeks unable to concentrate my attention on any subject that seemed worthy of investigation. One day, while I sat on the bank of Barton Creek, near Austin, in the very spot where, as I later learned, MacCook had worked on the famous agricultural ant (*Pogonomyrmex molefasciens*), I happened to see a file of cutting ants (*Atta texana*), each with its piece of leaf poised in its mandibles. I vividly remember the thrill of delightful fascination with which I watched the red-brown creatures trudging along under their green loads, and it seemed to me that I had at last found a group of organisms that would repay no end of study. (Wheeler 1918:294-295.)

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