MYRMICA PUERILIS STAERCKE, 1942, AN ANT NEW TO BRITAIN

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A nest of a *Myrmica* species was disclosed on September 21st, 1961, on the gravel bank extending along the coast northward from Deal in East Kent. The nest was in the protection of a clump of sea buckthorn. A single male was seen among workers near the surface of the nest and identified as *M. puerilis* Staercke. The workers were very similar to those of *M. scabrinodis* Nyl. in superficial appearance and size, but were more aggressive and stung freely. This species was described by Staercke (1942) from clear differences in the male from both that of *M. scabrinodis* and the more nearly similar *M. rugulosa* Nyl. Neither Staercke nor Boven (1959), however, were able to distinguish the female castes satisfactorily from those of *M. scabrinodis*. Wolf (1954) gave more precision to the male description by incorporating in a key a number of additional criteria including proportional lengths of leg and antennal segments. Sadil (1951) in his fine revision of Czechoslovakian *Myrmica* did not mention *M. puerilis*, but described as new a species *M. balcanina* from nest series taken in Czeckoslovakia and neighbouring countries making use of scape and petiole shape characters to distinguish the species in all castes from *M. scabrinodis*. From a careful reading of his description, it seems to me probable that *balcanina* Sadil is the same as *puerilis* Staecke, but no formal synonymy can be made until actual named specimens are compared.

DISTRIBUTION

Netherlands, Belgium, N.W. Germany (Staercke, 1942; van Boven, 1959; Wolf, 1954). Switzerland (Bibikoff collection). Czeckoslovakia, Bulgaria, Jugoslavia as '*balcanina*' (Sadil, 1951). In England only the one locality is so far known. Although I have been on the look out for this species for some years, I have no other British representatives in my collection nor have I seen such in any of the provincial museum collections that I have looked at. Dr. I. H. H. Yarrow has kindly confirmed that there are no English examples in the British Museum collections. In the Netherlands the distribution is mainly coastal including the Frisian islands. Sadil (1951) describes *M. balcanina* as a steppe species confined to warm dry localities. It is obvious that this ant could easily be overlooked since the female castes are so similar to those of *M. scabrinodis*, but the general absence of the characteristic *M. puerilis* male from collections of *Myrmica* species suggests that it is at least rather local. In many ways the workers have characters that come between *M. rugulosa* and *M. scabrinodis* and the species may be included in some collections under the name var. *rugulosoides* Forel, but this last includes any of the more weakly sculptured forms of *M. scabrinodis* and is so vaguely described as to have no taxonomic validity.

Myrmica puerilis Staercke

The male has the antennal scape short as in *M. scabrinodis*, but paler and more slender, and the body and appendage hairs are shorter and sparser. Together with *M. rugulosa* and *M. schencki* it is at once distinguished from either *M. scabrinodis* or *M. sabuleti* Mein. by the hind tarsal hairs which are much shorter on the underside than on the overside whereas in the latter species they are subequal. *M. puerilis* differs from *M. schencki* by the larger, less sculptured petiole node, the shorter second funiculus segment of the antenna and the absence of any depression on the head in front of the median ocellus. It is generally similar in its slender appearance and light colouring to *M. rugulosa*, but the petiole node is larger and flattened above so that the dorsal and anterior faces seen in profile make a much more obtuse angle than in *M. rugulosa* where these form a near right angle with the petiole shorter and higher. There are other useful distinctions including the antennal scape which is as long as the next 2½ funiculus segments, the first funiculus segment is about as long as the second, the hind tibia is slightly longer than the metatarsus. In *M. rugulosa* the scape is as long as the next three following