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CHAPTER 5

Notes on the Taxonomy of the Neotropical Ant Genus *Thaumatomyrmex* Mayr (Hymenoptera: Formicidae)

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Abstract

The *T. ferox* group of the Neotropical ant genus *Thaumatomyrmex* Mayr is reviewed. Analysis of metric characters revealed no evidence for species distinctions based on allometric relationships. Two species are recognized: *T. ferox* Mann and *T. atrox* Weber. *T. paludis* Weber is proposed as a synonym of *T. ferox*, and *T. manni* Weber and *T. zeteki* M. R. Smith are proposed as synonyms of *T. atrox*.

Introduction

The Neotropical ant genus *Thaumatomyrmex* is a myrmecologist's delight, being highly distinctive and rare. The mandibles are like pitchforks, each mandible composed of three long tines joined at the base (Fig. 1). Most collections are individuals obtained from Berlese funnels and similar devices that extract insects from leaf litter. New species and keys for workers have accumulated as additional specimens have appeared in collections (Weber 1939, 1942, M. R. Smith 1944, Kempf 1975). The first male of *Thaumatomyrmex* was recognized and described by Kempf (1954) and the larvae were described by G. C. and J. Wheeler (1964).

Kempf (1975) most recently revised the genus, and he estimated that the number of existing specimens in collections "hardly surpass the number of 70." A third of these were specimens of the most well known species, *T. mutilatus* Mayr of southern Brazil, and another third was composed of isolated male specimens. Thus, the taxonomy of the group has been based on very scanty material.

Kempf recognized three species groups based on workers. The *T. mutilatus* group, containing *T. mutilatus* and *T. contumax* Kempf, was characterized by a subopaque, silky surface sculpture, and a pair of closely-spaced setae on the clypeus. The *T. cochlearis* group, contain-