

# Teleutomyrnex schneideri Kutter 1950 and other parasitic ants found in the Pyrenees

(Hymenoptera, Formicidae)

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### Abstract

The extremely rare parasitic ant *Teleutomyrnex schneideri* Kutter is recorded for the first time in the Pyrenees. Other social parasitic ants, *Strongylognathus testaceus* (Schenck), *Harpagoxenus sublaevis* (Nylander), *Chalepoxenus muellerianus* (Finzi) and *Polyergus rufescens* (Latreille), also have been found in the western Pyrenees: Dept. Pyrénées-Atlantiques. The localities are indicated and some informations on biology and host species of the parasites are provided.

### Introduction

Social parasitic ants, living in dependence upon their host species, are usually rare. For many species little is known on their life history and distribution. On the other hand, they often occur in vulnerable habitats which are widely threatened in Europe due to changes in agricultural and forestry methods, pesticide treatment, extension of vacation colonies, skiing areas and so on. Recent efforts of the IUCN Species Survival Commission aim towards protection also of rare ant species, which ultimately must mean the protection of their particular habitats. Recording of localities where such endangered species are still existing is indispensable therefore, and the present paper may be seen as a contribution to these efforts.

Observation and collecting of the ants was done during a vacation stay at Laruns, Vallée d'Ossau, Dept. Pyrénées-Atlantiques, in July 1986. The following remarkable species have been found.

#### 1. *Teleutomyrnex schneideri* Kutter 1950 (Myrmicinae)

One colony, 28 July 1986, near Cabane du Lurien, 1 700 m, above the Lac de Fabrèges, Vallée d'Ossau. The nest was situated beneath a rock in a pasture, about 100 m outside the forest, next to a hiking path to Lac d'Artouste. A sample containing 31 alate ♀♀ and 4 ♂♂ of *T. schneideri* and some ♀♀, ♂♂ and alate ♀♀ of the host species was collected. Some *Teleutomyrnex* pupae were still present in the nest. No *Teleutomyrnex* or *Tetramorium* queen could be found, presumably because I did not dig very deeply into the nest in order not to destroy it too much. On 31 July I returned to the locality together with my son Christian. In a thorough study of about 120 *Tetramorium* nests we did not detect another one infested by the parasite; this may illustrate the rareness of the species.

The host species is *Tetramorium impurum* (Foerster), which could be identified with the ♂♂ found in the colony. This corresponds with a record of *Teleutomyrnex* near Briançon (French Alps, BUSCHINGER 1985), whereas formerly (KUTTER 1950, COLLINGWOOD 1956) the host species had been