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A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE ANT FAUNA OF FIVE GREEK ISLANDS

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Introduction

The Greek islands of Karpathos, Santorini, Chios, Kephallonia and Zante were visited at various dates from 1982-1988. Although visits in each case were of short duration from 5 to 12 days, a sufficient variety of species was collected to make useful comparisons and to establish a basis for future comparative studies in these areas.

Notes on the species

Aphaenogaster ionia, a black daytime foraging ant was generally distributed but not abundant. The other *Aphaenogaster* species collected were more cryptic and found as individuals on shady banks. There is a much richer fauna of the seed gathering genus, *Messor* with seven species found on Karpathos. The largest Balkan species is the conspicuous red *M. oertzeni* which occurs on Karpathos and Chios. This does not form trails but forages individually or in small groups.

The commonest *Messor* which was present on all the islands is *M. wasmanni*. This has large flat earth nests with crater-like openings usually surrounded by thick deposits of seed husks. These ants form trails up to 100 m long to a source of seed supply. Studies by HARKNESS and ISHAM (1988) show that there is no hostility between workers of neighbouring colonies. This bicoloured species occurs in South Italy, Corsica, Sardinia, the Balkans and more peripherally in West Turkey and Tunisia. It has been variously recorded in the literature as *M. meridionalis* André, *M. semirufus* André, *M. wasmanni* Krausse and was listed as *M. concolor* Tohmé by AGOSTI and COLLINGWOOD (1987) after seeing a "cotype" in the Hope Entomology Museum Oxford.