

Pp. 27-28 in: *4th International Hymenopterists Conference, 6-11th January 1999, Canberra, Australia. Program and abstracts.* Glen Osmond, South Australia: 4th International Hymenopterists Conference, 96 pp.

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Is the ant genus *Camponotus* paraphyletic?

The large cosmopolitan ant genus *Camponotus* contains about 930 described species, apportioned among 46 subgenera. There has been no comprehensive evaluation of the higher classification of the genus for more than 70 years. Here we present the results of a preliminary study of several major lineages of *Camponotus*, using sequence data from a portion (385 bp) of the mitochondrial cytochrome oxidase I gene. We sampled 31 *Camponotus* taxa (29 nominal species) belonging to nine subgenera. In addition we included representatives of three other ant genera from the subfamily Formicinae: *Polyrhachis*, *Formica*, and *Lasius*. The last two were treated as outgroups. The data were analyzed by both maximum parsimony and maximum likelihood, and the findings discussed below were robust to both methods. In our analyses *Camponotus* did not emerge as a monophyletic group. Rather, *Polyrhachis* consistently appeared as the sister group of a Malaysian species of *C. (Colobopsis)* (65% bootstrap support). There was modest support for the monophyly of *Camponotus* + *Polyrhachis* (61% bootstrap support). The mtDNA data also pointed to close relationships among groups of *Camponotus* species in the same subgenus from the same region, e.g., Neotropical *Myrmothrix* (96% bootstrap support), Holarctic *Camponotus* (s.s.) excluding *C. quercicola* (59%), a cluster of three Nearctic species of *Tanaemyrmex* (57%),