

October 2002, and detailed observations there were thus not possible). No *L. austriacus* workers were found on the soil surface, on herbaceous vegetation and on trees. We therefore consider the species to be mainly subterranean. This view is supported by an eye size reduction that is unusual in *Lasius* s.str.

On various occasions, specimens of the grass mealybug *Euripersia europaea* Newstead 1897 (Homoptera: Pseudococcidae; P.J. Gullan, pers. comm.) were found inside *L. austriacus* nests. This common root-feeding species is known to be associated with ants, especially *Lasius* spp. (Kosztarab & Kozár 1988). The association seems to contribute to the nutrition of *L. austriacus*. The extent and importance of this contribution, however, cannot be estimated at present.

Sexuals were found to be present in the nests from early July to mid September.

L. austriacus is a rare species in Central Europe, restricted to undisturbed xerothermous grassland: by the determination of > 60 000 ant specimens from the past 150 years from > 1 200 sites in Lower Austria (19 174 km², Schlick-Steiner *et al.*, 2003) no further *L. austriacus* populations could be detected. Whether there are populations in other Palaearctic regions cannot be judged at the moment. It seems unlikely, however, that the distribution range of *L. austriacus* extends much further to the north and west.

The *L. austriacus* population of Hnanice near Znoimo, Czech Republic, was referred to as *L. neglectus* by Seifert (2000). The identification as *L. austriacus* changes our picture of the distribution of the invasive *L. neglectus*, since no population of this pest species is known from a natural habitat in Central Europe so far.

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