

*PYRAMICA BOLTONI*, A NEW SPECIES OF LEAF-LITTER INHABITING  
ANT FROM FLORIDA (HYMENOPTERA: FORMICIDAE: DACETINI)

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ABSTRACT

The dacetine ant *Pyramica boltoni* is described from specimens collected in leaf litter in dry and mesic forest in central and northern Florida. It appears to be closely related to *P. dietrichi* (M. R. Smith), with which it shares peculiar modifications of the clypeus and the clypeal hairs. In total, 40 dacetine species (31 native and 9 exotic) are now known from southeastern North America.

Key Words: dacetine ants, Hymenoptera, Formicidae

RESUMEN

Se describe la hormiga Dacetini, *Pyramica boltoni*, de especímenes recolectados en la hojarasca de un bosque méxico seco en el área central y del norte de la Florida. Esta especie está aparentemente relacionada con *P. dietrichi* (M. R. Smith), con la cual comparte unas modificaciones peculiares del clipeo y las cerdas del clipeo. En total, hay 40 especies de hormigas Dacetini (31 nativas y 9 exóticas) conocidas en el sureste de América del Norte.

The tribe Dacetini is composed of small ants (usually under 3 mm long) that generally live in leaf litter where they prey on small arthropods, especially springtails (Collembola). The tribe has been formally defined by Bolton (1999, 2000). Nearctic dacetines may be recognized by a combination of features exemplified in Fig. 1: expanded, lobed occipital area of the head, elongate, narrowed projection of the head beyond the eyes, and the elongate, narrow mandibles. Most species have enlarged, spoon-shaped or otherwise modified hairs on the head, especially on the clypeus, and whitish, spongy processes on the petiole and post-petiole, as in Fig. 1. In spite of their striking appearance, and a diversity of character states that allow easy recognition of most species, the dacetines remain poorly known. This can be attributed to their small size and cryptic habits.

There are only two Nearctic genera of Dacetini: *Strumigenys* and *Pyramica*. Other genera listed for this region, for example, in Bolton's 1995 catalog of ants, were synonymized by Bolton (1999) in his reclassification of the genera of the Dacetini. In addition, certain species that had been assigned to *Strumigenys* were referred to *Pyramica* on the basis of a series of fundamental character states. In practice, Nearctic *Pyramica* may be recognized by their broad, well separated mandibular bases, while *Strumigenys* have narrow mandibular bases that appear to be attached near the midline of the head (Bolton 1999). *Pyramica* species use their mandibles to seize and hold prey until it can be stung, while *Strumigenys* species are able to snap their mandibles shut with such force that the prey may be killed outright (Bolton 1999). Bolton (1999) presents a detailed

discussion of generic distinctions and the evolution of mandibular structure in the Dacetini.

Dacetine ants show their greatest diversity in moist tropical regions. The revision of the tribe by Bolton (2000) includes 872 species, only 43 of which occur in North America north of Mexico. Southeastern North America has the great majority of Nearctic species, including, by my count, 31 native species and 9 introduced species. The native species appear to represent a Nearctic radiation; only 1 native species has a range that extends into the Neotropics. It has been suggested (Deyrup 1988) that the diverse southeastern fauna is composed of species that persisted in mesic southeastern refuges during the climatic shifts of the Pleistocene, providing a partial glimpse of what was once a much richer Arctotertiary woodland fauna.

With this background, it is not surprising that additional species of dacetine ants are still being discovered in the Southeast. Not only are these ants small and cryptic, but some species may have relictual geographic distribution in isolated patches of habitat, or they may be dependent on a specialized microhabitat that remains unknown.

*Pyramica boltoni* Deyrup, **new species**

Diagnosis of Worker (Fig. 1) and Queen

Distinguished from all other *Pyramica* by the following combination of character states: clypeus obtusely pointed, with four radiating, subapical, and two decumbent, apical hairs; two large, curved standing divergent hairs at apical third of clypeus; mandibles with toothless area (= "diastemma") basal to apical series of teeth barely visible in dorsal view. Otherwise, it is generally similar to *P. di-*