

A NEW SPECIES OF THE ANT GENUS *LEPTOTHORAX* FROM FLORIDA,  
WITH A KEY TO THE *LEPTOTHORAX* OF THE SOUTHEAST  
(HYMENOPTERA: FORMICIDAE)

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ABSTRACT

A new species of myrmicine ant is described from Florida: *Leptothorax palustris* is known from workers and associated queens and males collected in a marsh and in frequently flooded pinelands in the Apalachicola National Forest in northwestern Florida. Nests are near the surface in root mats that extend into small open sandy hummocks. The species resembles *Leptothorax texanus* Wheeler, a species of adjacent well-drained sandy sites, differing primarily in the structure of the petiole and postpetiole and color. *Leptothorax davisi* Wheeler is synonymized with *Leptothorax texanus* Wheeler (new synonymy); this is based on extensive and previously unknown variability in *L. texanus*, even in single sites and within nest series. An illustrated key is presented for the identification of the eleven species of *Leptothorax* known from the Atlantic Coastal states north through North Carolina, with the addition of Alabama.

Key Words: southeastern ants, Apalachicola National Forest, Osceola National Forest

RESUMEN

Se describe una nueva especie de hormiga Myrmicinae de Florida. *Leptothorax palustris* se conoce con base en obreras, reinas y machos asociadas, colectados en ciénegas y bosques húmedos de pino en el Apalachicola National Forest del noreste de Florida. Los nidos son superficiales en pequeños promontorios de arena. Este especie se parece a *Leptothorax texanus* Wheeler, una especie de de áreas cercanas pero más arenosas y con mejor drenaje. *Leptothorax texanus* se distingue de *L. palustris* por la estructura del peciolo y postpeciolo, y su color. *Leptothorax davisi* Wheeler se convierte en sinónimo de *Leptothorax texanus* Wheeler (*nuevo sinónimo*); ésta cambio se establece con base en la extrema variación, hasta ahora desconocida, de *L. texanus* al interior de sitios y nidos particulares. Se incluye una clave ilustrada de las once especies de *Leptothorax* conocidas de los estados de la costa atlántica hasta North Carolina, incluyendo Alabama.

Translation provided by author.

Members of the genus *Leptothorax* are generally timid and retiring ants that do not recruit strongly to baits and are often specialized in their choice of nesting places. It is not remarkable, therefore, that species of *Leptothorax* may be overlooked, even in relatively well-known countries such as the United States, with its long history of assiduous myrmecologists. The species described below seems to have escaped detection up to now because it occurs in an unusual habitat (frequently flooded and burned pine forests), where it probably conducts most of its foraging hidden under a loose layer of pine needles and leaves. The first known specimens were collected in pitfalls by David Lubertazzi in a study of ant associations in selected vegetation types in the Apalachicola National Forest, near Tallahassee, Florida.

For a diagnosis of the genus *Leptothorax*, see the character states in the various couplets of the keys provided by Bolton (1994). A rough diagnosis of the genus as it appears in the U.S. is as follows: petiole with two segments; antennal scrobes lacking; petiole not quadrate in lateral view; head and body with some erect hairs; antennae with three conspicuously enlarged terminal segments; propodeal spines or teeth present; postpetiole attached normally, not affixed to the dorsal surface of the gaster.

The species described below would belong to the former subgenus *Myrafant*, which was recently revived by MacKay (2000). We hesitate to use this subgenus until it has been reviewed in a wider context. The Florida species *Leptothorax torrei* (Aguayo), for example, seems to fit comfortably into the revived *Myrafant* as currently de-