

WILLIAM L. BROWN

A NEW SPECIES OF EXOTIC *PONERA* FROM NORTH
CAROLINA (HYMENOPTERA, FORMICIDAE)

By Marion R. Smith

D. L. Wray of the North Carolina Department of Agriculture in 1959 collected a most unusual species of *Ponera* in a wooded area near Acre, Beaufort County, North Carolina. The specimens were taken from leaf mold with a Berlese funnel. This species differed from all North American species of *Ponera* in its small size, slender body, unusually short and thick antennae, and an almost complete lack of eyes. Because I had an insufficient number of specimens and because *Ponera* is a very large and cosmopolitan genus containing many species with very subtle characters, I was discouraged from trying to name the individuals specifically. Then in 1960 I received 12 lots containing 177 specimens (workers and females) of this species collected (1958-1960) by Professor W. G. Carter of Washington and Lee University. He collected them with a Berlese funnel from leaf mold and litter from a number of diverse habitats in six other counties in North Carolina (see detailed notes below). This additional material enabled me to place the species in the *Ponera tenuis* group of Wilson (1957, Bull. Mus. Compar. Zool., Harvard Univ. 116: 358-361) and nearest *tenuis*.

All species of the *tenuis* group known to me are exotic and *tenuis* itself was originally described from New Guinea. It seems, therefore, there should be little doubt that this new species was introduced. The very small size and cryptobiotic habits of these ants make easy their unwitting spread by man. It is my opinion that the ants were probably introduced into North Carolina by the Armed Services during World War II or shortly thereafter. The ability of this species to live in diverse habitats where temperature, moisture, ground cover, and soil texture vary greatly undoubtedly accounts for its becoming so easily established.

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