

back and forth. Sometimes they retreated from one place to gather at another. The actual beginning of a foray was not certain until a line of ants extended a foot or more from the nest. Once a trail began, ants drained off from other parts of the nest so gradually that the front line might be as far as 8 feet away before the last got started; but soon the ants condensed to a group 2 to 4 feet long and 6 to 8 inches wide. Once a raiding column was formed, it moved fast — about 3 feet a minute — but always the ants alternated running back and forth and from side to side with the forward movement, so there were never any consistent leaders to the group.

The speed and compactness of the column was usually maintained, but sometimes the column widened to 10 or 12 inches, especially when loose leaves were being investigated. But, while a few ants might search for openings along the way, the main column kept moving steadily forward with no hesitation, following what seemed to be an obvious trail to a definite objective. Usually they arrived precisely at a nest to be raided. Sometimes they missed it by 2 to 10 inches. Once the spot was reached, all of the ants began searching every crevice in a frenzied fashion until the nest entrance was found. If the compact mass of workers did not find the entrance immediately, they began spreading out in widening circles. If the located entrance was open, they poured down it; if it was barricaded with pebbles and soil, they might dig for as much as 3 to 7 minutes before gaining admittance. Most of the *F. p. nitidiventris* colonies in the raided area kept their nests barricaded. Workers usually did not try to defend the nest, nor did they take away brood. Sometimes a worker was carried out and released; sometimes one ran out by itself, but there was seldom any fighting. Once the *Polyergus* gained entrance to a nest, it was only a minute or two until an ant reappeared carrying a pupa or larva. Others followed quickly, carrying out loot and starting for home. They returned by the same general path that they had taken in coming, each ant picking its own way over a 5- to 10-inch width. At home the ants entered the nest with their brood (at the Lawn Nest they sometimes piled it up for the *F. p. nitidiventris* workers to carry down).

When conditions were right, a second raid would take place. Sometimes the second column started before all the first ants had come in; sometimes there was a delay while they milled about the nest. Occasionally the second raid began with ants pouring out of the nest after all had gone below ground. On rare occasions a third raid took place; and once, after a successful raid, 2 columns started out in different directions at exactly the same time.