

SUPPLEMENTARY STUDIES ON ANT
LARVAE: TERATOMYRMEX¹

BY GEORGE C. WHEELER AND JEANETTE WHEELER
Laboratory of Desert Biology
Desert Research Institute
University of Nevada System
Reno 89507

The first collector of this Australian genus, T. Greaves, Esq. (in 1942), must have been surprised when he first viewed his specimens under magnification; he probably thought he had collected diseased ants. The describer (J. J. McAreavey 1957) was evidently somewhat astonished for he gave it the name *Teratomyrmex*, from the Greek *teras* (*teratos*) monster, marvel, wonder + *myrmex* ant. We have in English *teratism* the worship of monsters, *teratology* the study of monstrosities and *teratoma* a tumor derived from more than one embryonic layer and made up of a mixture of tissues. *Teratomyrmex* is certainly an appropriate name, for the worker looks as if it has a huge tumor on the top of its thorax (see Fig. 7 and 8). Aside from this unique peculiarity the genus is quite ordinary and belongs in the Formicini, an ordinary tribe of Formicinae, which includes such anatomically commonplace genera as *Acanthomyops*, *Lasius* and *Formica*.

The first specimens of *Teratomyrmex* we have seen were a gift from Rev. B. B. Lowery (of Norwood, South Australia) in 1967. In the accompanying letter he wrote: "I have also taken the liberty of filling up the vacant spaces in the box with a few specially chosen mountings for your collection. Make sure you have a look at the *Teratomyrmex* and *Epopostruma frosti* under the microscope. Both these species, by the way, are very rare." In a later note he wrote: "The species [*T. greavesi*] appears to be rare in the ranges near Murwillumbah NE. NSW. Forages on low shrubs and in leaf litter. Nests in very moist places, usually in white-rotten timber. It is very easily mistaken for a small black *Iridomyrmex*." He also included a quotation from a personal communication he had received from Tom Greaves: "'*T. greavesi* is a dominant ant in residual forest,' i.e., in the Jackall Ranges, about 75 miles north of Brisbane."

¹Hymenoptera: Formicidae: Formicinae.

Manuscript received by the editor December 10, 1973