

A NEW SPECIES OF THE GENUS *MERANOPLUS*

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Melbourne.

Subfamily MYRMICINAE Lepeletier

Tribe MERANOPLINI Emery

Genus MERANOPLUS Smith, F., emend. Mayr.

**MERANOPLUS TESTUDINEUS** sp. nov.

Worker. Length of head dorsally 1.13 mm. ; Weber's length 1.13 mm. ; cephalic index 93; total length 4.15 mm.

Colour uniformly yellowish-red or orange, except for the eyes and mandibular teeth which are black. Mandibles smooth except for a few transverse striae. Scrobes smooth; sides of head with a few transverse striae, but remainder of head microscopically densely reticulate with a few additional scattered shallow punctures. Dorsum of thorax, petiole, postpetiole and gaster microscopically densely reticulate. Sides of thorax with finer sculpture and some traces of transverse striae, while the posterior face of the postpetiole has traces of circular striae. Scapes and femora finely longitudinally striate.

Hair long, pale reddish-yellow, suberect, scattered on head and body; it is shorter on the upper surface of the head, scapes and legs, while on the funiculi it is denser and adpressed.

Head, excluding the translucent border, very slightly longer than broad, subcordiform, broadest across the occiput; sides curved inwards at the posterior quarter and outwards again at the centre, so that the head is almost as broad across the centre as at the occiput. Anterior half of the head is narrowed with evenly convex sides. On each side of the head from the posterior corners to the clypeus is an evenly convex pale reddish-yellow, broad, translucent lamella, one-fifth as broad as occiput through which can be seen the distorted outline of the black eyes. The occipital border is concave and posterior corners rounded. Mandibles short, very curved, with five sharp black teeth, the apical longest. Mandibles concealed by clypeus, only visible when front of head is tilted. Clypeus subperpendicular to upper surface of head, transverse, anterior border concealed in dorsal view, but it is concave with anterior corners produced forward as blunt prongs, the posterior border faint. Frontal area indistinct; frontal carinae represented by flattened lobes bordering the clypeus, each slightly longer than broad. Below the lamellate border, in profile view, can be seen the deep scrobe which holds the entire folded antenna. The scape extends almost to posterior border of head. Funiculi eight segmented; first segment almost as long as three following together; second and third as long as broad, equal in size; fourth and fifth slightly larger; apical three segments form a distinct club with apical segment almost equal to the two preceding. Eyes moderately large, hemispherical, placed below the scrobe at the posterior quarter of sides of head.

Thorax, excluding the translucent membrane, very irregular in outline; including the membrane, it is almost twice as broad as long, slightly broader behind than in front; anterior border feebly concave with anterior corners sharp, sides evenly convex curving into the posterior border which is slightly concave in the middle. No sutures on the dorsum. Between each anterior corner of prothorax and neck is an arc of translucent membrane. About the centre of the thorax on each

side is a large oval of translucent membrane, separated from a smaller oval by a narrow, long, blunted projection from the epinotal region. Another oval of translucent membrane on the posterior border is almost enclosed by narrow curved projections from the posterior corners of the epinotum. Through the broad lamellate border extending behind the thorax can be seen the outline of the petiole. In profile, the dorsum of the thorax is feebly convex. Below the lamella the anterior corners of the prothorax are produced as short sharp spines. The posterior upper corner of the epinotum is produced in a longer spine which is partly covered by the lamella. About the middle of the declivity of the epinotum is a long, sharp, straight spine, over which spreads a triangular translucent lamella, partly concealing the profile view of the petiole and extending almost to the dorsum of the epinotum.

Upper border of petiole, viewed from above, is reduced to a transverse line; in profile it is scale like with the anterior and posterior faces feebly convex and meeting at the blunt apex; ventrally a short sharp spine is present. From the front, the node of the petiole is twice as broad as at the base, the upper border convex and without a trace of lamellae.

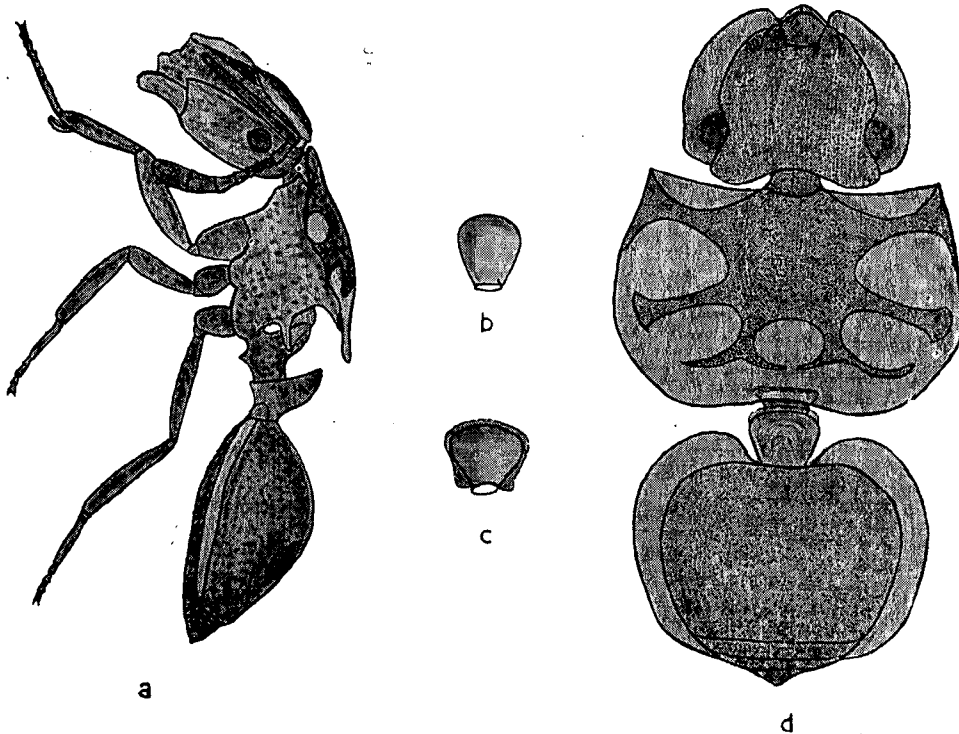


Figure 1.—*Meranoplus testudineus* sp. nov.

a. Lateral view of worker. b. Petiole; node viewed from front. c. Postpetiole; node viewed from front. d. Dorsal view of head and body.

Postpetiole similar to petiole in size, but from above, the posterior face can be seen giving the impression that the postpetiole is a large trapezium ; in profile, it is scale-like, a little higher than the petiole, with anterior face straight, the posterior face convex and meeting the anterior face at a sharp angle. From the front, the node of the postpetiole is similar to the petiole, but broader and bordered by a margin of translucent membrane. Gaster cordiform, consisting mostly of the first segment ; sides bordered by a broad translucent lamella. Legs slender and comparatively long ; tibiae of the anterior pair with large pectinate spurs.

LOCALITY.—Port George the Fourth, north-western Australia. Collected by H. Taylor.

MATERIAL.—Holotype worker (T5319), in collections of the Queensland Museum, Brisbane ; four paratypes in collections C.S.I.R.O., Canberra, National Museum, Melbourne, and collection McAreavey, Melbourne. These five workers show little variation in colour or size.

MEASUREMENTS OF FOUR PARATYPES.—Length of head, dorsally .100–1.13 mm., Weber's length 0.95–1.13 mm., cephalic index 93–95, total length 3.5–4.15 mm.