

seem not to be taxonomically significant. They include relatively 'soft' characteristics, such as the degree of elevation of the propodeal spines and the colour of the appendages.

In Australia *mucronata* ranges from Lockerbie Scrub, south to Hinchinbrook Island, Qld (Grid cells 10/142, 12/143, 16/145, 17/145, 17/146, 18/146). Moluccan and New Guinean records are from Vogelkop, Sururai (01/133); Biak I. (01/136); Lumi, Torricelli Mts (03/142); Naru, SW of Madang (05/145); Wampit, nr Lae (06/146); and nr Sogeri (09/147). This species builds arboreal nests by joining leaves with silk, or by constructing small, pocket-like structures of silk and assorted plant fragments against the underside of living leaves on low trees and shrubs. It inhabits lowland tropical rainforest.

***Polyrhachis obscura* Forel, 1895 stat.nov.**

Polyrhachis hookeri r. *obscura* Forel, 1895:44. Type locality; Qld, Mackay (21/149) (8 syntype workers, 2 alate queens examined, MHNG, ANIC).

Comparison of *P. hookeri obscura* syntypes with the ANIC nomenclatural paradigm of *P. hookeri* (see above), and consideration of other material, demonstrates that *obscura* almost certainly constitutes a species separate from *P. hookeri*. The most obvious differences involve the colour of the mesosomal dorsum, which in *hookeri* is mostly metallic green, blue or purple, but dark brown in *obscura*, with a faint but distinct coppery metallescence. Also, the gaster in *hookeri* is brownish-black, usually with a metallic green sheen, and has a dark brownish-maroon coloured median longitudinal dorsal patch. The gaster in *P. obscura* is reddish-brown (lighter and more reddish than the mesosoma), with an equivalent dorsal patch much less distinctly visible. The propodeal spines of *P. obscura* are relatively short, dorso-ventrally flattened and unusually wide at the base; each has a conspicuous, brightly reflective smooth dorsal patch near its base; the petiolar spines are relatively short compared to those of *hookeri*. *P. obscura* is apparently rare; the only specimens known to us are the types.

***Polyrhachis obtusa* Emery, 1897 stat.nov.**

Polyrhachis aurea var. *obtusa* Emery, 1897: 589. Original localities: New Guinea: Haveri (09/147), Kapa Kapa (09/147), Humboldt Bay (02/140) (syntype from Haveri examined, MNHG).

The syntypes of *P. aurea* (original localities: Qld, Rockhampton (23/150) and Gayndah (25/151), workers, NHMW, MHNG) and *P. aurea obtusa* clearly represent separate species. The pronotal humeri of *aurea* are distinctly spinose, while those of *obtusa* are at most obtusely angulate or subdentate. The head in *aurea* is relatively narrow, and the Scape Index (SI = Scape Length x 100/Head Width, measured immediately in front of the eyes) relatively high (>125). SI in *P. obtusa* is <117. Available specimens of *P. obtusa* are generally smaller than those of *P. aurea*; Head Length (HL) of the *obtusa* syntype is 1.65 mm; other New Guinean worker specimens are consistently smaller; the smallest examples we have seen are from the Torres Strait Islands, where HL ranges from 1.37 to 1.53 mm. HL in available *P. aurea* specimens exceeds 1.70 mm.

The first Australian records of *P. obtusa* are from the Torres Strait Islands: Boigu (09/142), Darnley (09/143), Moa (= Banks, 10/142), and Prince of Wales (10/142) (all 1974, H. Heatwole and E. Cameron; ANIC).

Recent West Irian and Papua New Guinea records are from Nabire, S of Geelvink Bay (03/135); Lumi, Torricelli Mountains (03/142); Madang, Amele (05/145); near Lae (06/147); and Obo, Fly River (07/141) (ANIC, BPBM, QMBA).

***Polyrhachis pallescens* Mayr, 1876 stat.nov.**

Polyrhachis guerini var. *pallescens* Mayr, 1876:74.

Type locality: Qld, Rockhampton (23/150) (type presumed lost).

Polyrhachis aurea var. *pallescens* Mayr; Emery, 1897:584.

Polyrhachis aurea var. *depilis* Emery, 1897:589 (foot-note). Type locality: Queensland (syntype examined, MHNG). syn.nov.

The unique holotype of *P. guerini pallescens* cannot be located in the Mayr collection (NHMW) and must be presumed to have been lost.

Syntypes of *P. aurea* (see above under *P. obtusa*) and *P. aurea depilis*, have been compared and matched against the ANIC nomenclatural paradigms of *P. guerini* (established above), and other material. We conclude that *P. aurea*, *P. guerini* and *P. depilis* are almost certainly separate species.

The mesosomal dorsum of *P. aurea* is covered with dense, golden pubescence and abundant,