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Biology and myriapod egg predation by the Neotropical myrmicine ant *Stegomyrmex vizottoi* (Hymenoptera: Formicidae)*

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Summary

For the first time for a Neotropical ant and for Myrmicinae, the searching behavior and specialized predation of spirobolid millipede eggs by *Stegomyrmex vizottoi* Diniz will be described. The relationship between morphology and habits is studied, as are nest architecture and distribution of the ant population in the nest chambers. We also report on some observations of behavior in the field and laboratory.

Introduction

There are several published observations of ants preying on arthropod eggs, although most accounts are of generalists' diets. Some ants are, however, specialized to some degree in preying on arthropod eggs.

Eidmann (1936) found many globular objects resembling arthropod eggs inside natural nest chambers of *Erebomyrma eidmanni*, while Brown (1979) and Wilson (1962) found similar structures piled along with the troglophilic *Erebomyrma urichi* brood in natural nests. Wilson (op. cit) stated that those eggs "were cared for by the captive colony in the artifical nest and may have been used sporadically for food, although direct feeding was not observed".

Hölldobler and Wilson (1990) considered *Erebomyrma* as the least-specialized oophagous genus, as they readily accept freshly crushed larvae and pupae of *Tenebrio molitor*, as well as chopped *Armitermes* and moths. This genus has also been fed moth eggs in the laboratory (see Wilson, 1986, for *E. nevermanni*).

Solenopsis laeviceps was observed by Emerson (in Wheeler, 1936) to nest at the bottom of termite nests at Kartabo, Guyana, where he once found 75 to 100 termite

* We dedicate this paper to William L. Brown Junior, on the occasion of his 70th birthday.