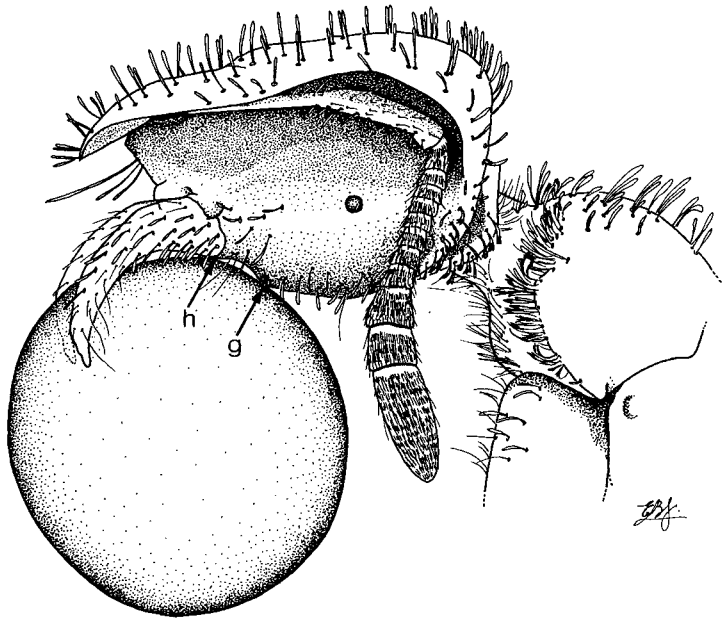

Figure 2. Lateral view of head and anterior portion of trunk, showing the antennal scrobes and diplopod egg being held under the mandibles. Note the curved mandibles acting as pincers, the two points at the anteroventral region of head, indicated by arrows – hypostomal (h) and anterior gular (g) regions – that help to support the egg, and the head-pronotal fringe of brush hairs

avoid light, walking preferably under leaves or searching small crevices. To observe them walking above ground, it was necessary to shade the area with an umbrella.

The workers walked very slowly, inspecting every small opening, fissure, or cleft in the soil. We wondered whether they were searching for their nest, but then we noted one particular ant excavating the soil inside such a cavity, working it with the mandibles into small pieces, and forcing back the small blocks with its forelegs. While working, it completely withdrew the antennae (scape and funiculus) into the scrobes. After some minutes the worker, with one half of its body already in the cavity, left the opening, carrying an egg under the mandibles. Following this and other individuals searching for eggs, we observed that sometimes workers could even disappear in cavities for many minutes, perhaps exploring or inspecting natural chambers or tunnels. During this process, repeated many times in daily foraging trips, the workers gradually accumulated soil particles on their bodies, becoming covered with a muddy sheet, which seemed to act as a protective shield and as camouflage. As pointed out by Hölldobler and Wilson (1986), and as can be seen in Fig. 1a, their integument is foveolate, and can accrete earth with the aid of specialized hairs. Adding this effect to the slow movements and to the habit of feigning death almost immediately after any disturbance, we have realized why these ants are so rarely collected.

Although most field observations were made in daylight, some workers were also observed foraging at night, between 8 and 10 PM. We also noticed that foraging