

THE LARVA OF SIMOPELTA (HYMENOPTERA: FORMICIDAE)

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The larva of *Simopelta* deserves to be ranked with those of *Leptanilla* and *Proceratium* as the most aberrant and bizarre among the ants. In fact, when we first looked at Borgmeier's (1950) sketch, we doubted that it could be a formicid larva. It had a somewhat dipterous habitus and there are myrmecophilous larvae among the Diptera. So we asked Dr. Borgmeier if he would send us some material for study. His response was most generous—70 larvae.

A detailed study of this material revealed the presence of most formicid larval characters, but since we still had doubts, we sent some to Dr. Willis W. Wirth at the United States National Museum. Dr. Wirth¹ has written us that "the complete series of abdominal spiracles indicate that they are not dipterous. I know of no Diptera higher than the Fungivoridae-Itonididae series which have a complete series of abdominal spiracles. Traces of the usual pair of apical spiracles and the lack of a posterior differentiated pair of spiracles are practically always to be found in the higher Diptera."¹

Genus SIMOPELTA Mann

Body rather stout and nearly straight. Diameter greatest at abdominal somite IV, decreasing to the anterior end of the abdomen, then increasing to the mesothorax. Prothorax conoidal and capable of being retracted to a limited extent into the mesothorax; basal diameter (in preserved material) abruptly offset from

¹Obiter dictum: Dr. Wirth showed the larvae to a colleague, who said that if they were ant larvae, he was ready to believe anything.