

The genus *Plectroctena* contains 17 known species and is restricted in distribution to the Ethiopian Region where a majority of the species are located in the rainforest areas of West and Central Africa (Bolton 1974). Taxonomic treatments of the genus include those of Santschi (1924) and Bolton (1974), while additional accounts of included species are found, for instance, in Arnold (1915), Wheeler (1922), and Lévieux (1972). Little is known about the biology of the genus except that some of the species are cryptic or subterranean foragers, that they build nests in the earth or in «extremely rotten or collapsed logs,» and that they prey primarily upon millipedes (Bolton 1974).

On 4 June 1974, we discovered and excavated a large nest of a new species which we initially identified as *P. subterranea* Arnold. The nest was found in the soil in dense forest bordering the Bandama River at the Lamto Field Station of the University of Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire. Lamto is situated in Guinea savanna off the main road about 50 km south of Toumodi at 6° 13'N, 5° 41' W. A description of the species follows and because so little is known about the biology of the genus, we offer also our field observations on the nest and its contents.

Methods

The nest, as it was excavated, was carefully mapped and measured. The contents of each chamber in the nest, excluding the adults, were collected separately for analysis. However, chambers I, II, and III collapsed upon one another and the contents of each of these chambers could not be separated with certainty. Thus the data for these chambers are combined. Laboratory analysis included the removal of all pupae from their cocoons.

Taxonomy of the Species

Plectroctena lygaria sp. n.
(Figs. 1, 2)