NOVOMESSOR MANNI A SYNONYM OF *APHAENOGASTER ENSIFERA* (HYMENOPTERA:FORMICIDAE)[1]

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The genus *Novomessor* as it stands contains 3 species of rather large-sized but slender myrmicine ants living in arid and subarid parts of the southwestern United States and Mexico. The definitive treatment is the revision of Wheeler and Creighton (1934); later discussions of the taxonomy and distribution of *N. cockerelli* and *N. albisetosus* are to be found in Creighton (1950: 155-157; 1955) and of *N. manni* in Kannowski (1954).

Novomessor was originally described as *Aphaenogaster,* and the habitus certainly recalls that genus; in fact, the characters supposed to distinguish the two genera are not very strong when one considers the whole world of fauna of this complex. The worker metanotal groove ("mesoepinotal suture") is obsolete or nearly so in *Novomessor,* but distinct in most *Aphaenogaster;* and the forewing venation of *Novomessor* is of the *Formica* pattern, with a single closed cubital cell, versus 2 closed cubital cells (or a single closed cubital cell with venation of the *Solenopsis* pattern) in *Aphaenogaster.*

The distinction is weak in the case of *N. albisetosus,* which shows a vestigial metanotal "suture", and it should be mentioned that the Japanese *A. osimensis* is well on the way to the sutureless condition. The group of *A. mutica, A. smithi,* and *A. boulderensis* also shows a tendency toward metanotal groove reduction. Wing venation similar to that of *Novomessor* is found in the Madagascan *A. swammerdami,* also a large ant, and one with nests having very large, rough, "rat-hole" type entrances like those of *Novomessor*

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