

ally affirms that the specimens were among the fresh insect collections turned over to her by the excursion party.

In November, 1951, W. L. Brown visited the Esperance area in an attempt to obtain additional specimens of *Nothomyrmecia*. Several days' collecting in the vicinity of Esperance and Mt. Merivale proved fruitless. In January, 1955, a second, more intensive search was conducted by a party consisting of Bob Douglas, Caryl Haskins, Vincent Serventy and Edward Wilson. This group proceeded by truck directly to the abandoned Thomas River Station. From January 26 to 29, ants were collected in the Thomas River basin and in the sandplain heath for a distance of seven miles north of the Thomas River, or two miles north of the junction of the Balladonia-Thomas River and Esperance-Israelite Bay tracks. Collections were made during both the day and night and involved excavations and sweeping. When these efforts proved unsuccessful the group spent two days collecting at Goora and in the vicinity of Mt. Ragged. The great majority of ant species found at these several localities were encountered repeatedly, thus indicating that collecting was approaching the "saturation" level. But not a single *Nothomyrmecia* was found.

A note concerning the ecology of the Thomas River area is in order here. The Thomas River is set in a depression that appears to range between 75 and 100 feet below the level of the surrounding sandplain. Near the centre of the depression is the old homestead location, and this in turn is about three miles north of the beach. At least four "hollows," or shallow valleys, radiate outward from the centre and extend for distances of a mile or more. The bottoms of the hollows are irregular, dry, salt stream beds, covered with a good growth of succulent halophiles and scattered paperbark trees (*Melaleuca cuticularis*). Some of the latter are of very large size. According to Mr Bob Douglas, a resident of Esperance, the depression was originally covered with large yate trees (*Eucalyptus cornuta*) and paperbark, and the floor supported a rich growth of grass. The locality was settled in 1875, and overgrazing by sheep and the cutting of many of the yate trees has altered it greatly. In 1955 the grass were found to be mostly gone, and large stretches of wattle (*Acacia* spp.) covered much of the area. In only a few spots, e.g., a quarter-mile north of the homestead, did the yate forest appear to approach a relatively primitive condition. The most abundant ant in the depression was *Iridomyrmex detectus* Fr. Smith (the common meat ant); this species appeared to be most abundant in disturbed situations. Species of *Myrmecia*, *Rhytidoponera*, *Crematogaster*, *Camponotus*, and *Polyrhachis* were also abundant. Less common genera included *Amblyopone*, *Ponera*, *Meranoplus*, *Podomyrma*, *Oligomyrmex*, and *Stigmatocros*. Perhaps less than 30 species occurred in the Thomas River depression, a much sparser local fauna than is to be found in the forested regions from Norseman to Balladonia in the north.

On leaving the Thomas River depression and proceeding onto the sandplain, a distinctly different fauna was encountered. This included distinctive species of *Myrmecia*, *Rhytidoponera*, *Merano-*