

Foraging Behavior

All species are diurnal, active from sunrise to sunset. During the months of January, February and March, the warm, rainy season in Madagascar, foraging activity was much greater than during July and August, which are cool and dry. Foragers for all six species spend most of their time searching the upper surface of vegetation close to the ground. When found, nests were usually located less than 5 meters from these foragers. Although *Terataner* workers forage individually, they will also sometimes initiate small group raids.

T. alluaudi raided other ants and termites that were nesting inside branches. *T. foreli* was found attacking small insects and beetle larvae in branches by chewing their way into the wood to reach their prey. *T. sp. a* was observed bringing in and caching large numbers of lepidoptera larvae as well as termites and other insects. *T. sp. b* was observed bringing in dismembered parts of insects. *T. sp. c*, and *d* were not observed raiding and their food sources are unknown.

DISCUSSION

Ergatoid queens, reported for the first time in the genus *Terataner*, are present in all six Malagasy species studied. Thus the most probable mode of colony founding in these ants is budding, where a mated ergatoid queen and some workers leave an established nest and occupy a nearby plant cavity. Flightless queens severely restrict the dispersal ability of these ants and may account, in part, for the limited geographic distributions of some of these species. This mode of reproduction, combined with their preference for forested habitats, means that Malagasy *Terataner* may be extremely vulnerable to habitat destruction. Malagasy *Terataner* share other ecological similarities: 1) small colony size, ranging from 3 to 89 workers; 2) workers that are general predators which group raid the nests of other ants, termites, and attack live insects; and 3) nest sites in plant cavities such as twigs and hollow branches close to the ground. The presence of spider and clerid beetle mimics of several *Terataner* species (Alpert, unpublished data) suggests that workers are distasteful and/or formidable to vertebrate predators.