

Revision of the *Iridomyrmex discors* Species-group (Hymenoptera: Formicidae)

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ABSTRACT The *discors* species-group of the ant genus *Iridomyrmex* Mayr is defined for the first time and revised at the species level. The group is composed of two species, *I. discors* Forel and *I. obscurior* Forel (the latter previously a subspecies of *I. discors*). The names *I. discors aeneogaster* Wheeler, *I. discors occipitalis* Forel and *I. discors occipitalis exilior* Forel (an unavailable infrasubspecific name) are newly synonymised with *I. discors*. *I. discors* is distributed broadly across southern Australia (excluding Tasmania) and occupies a wide range of habitats. *I. obscurior* is known from only two collections, both relatively moist sites in southeastern Australia.

Introduction

Members of the ant genus *Iridomyrmex* Mayr are common and prominent members of many Australian ecosystems (Andersen and Patel 1994; Greenslade and Halliday 1982). They are frequently encountered during ecological studies and are well represented in most entomological collections. Unfortunately, limited attention has been given to the species-level taxonomy of the genus and identifications are difficult. In the present study the *I. discors* species-group is defined and revised at the species level. The group contains five specific or subspecific names (one an unavailable infrasubspecific name). During the current study the group was found to contain two valid species, *I. discors* Forel and *I. obscurior* Forel. The remaining three names represent junior synonyms of *I. discors*. Although *I. discors* is relatively common it has received little discussion in the literature. The only detailed study is that

of Cox *et al.* (1989), who examined its chemical constituents.

Taxonomic status of *Iridomyrmex* and diagnosis of the *Iridomyrmex discors* group

For the current status and identification of *Iridomyrmex* see Shattuck (1992a, b). Members of the *I. discors* group can be separated from other species in the genus by the presence of a relatively broad head (Fig. 1), short antennal scapes (Fig. 2), and erect or suberect hairs on the antennal scapes and tibiae. This group is morphologically most similar to smaller members of the *I. purpureus* group and to species related to *I. mayri* Forel. They may be separated from both of these by the head shape and scape length relative to head width, and from *I. mayri* and relatives by the larger number of erect hairs on the antennal scapes and the shorter anteromedial clypeal projection (Figs 3, 4), which projects at most 0.02 mm

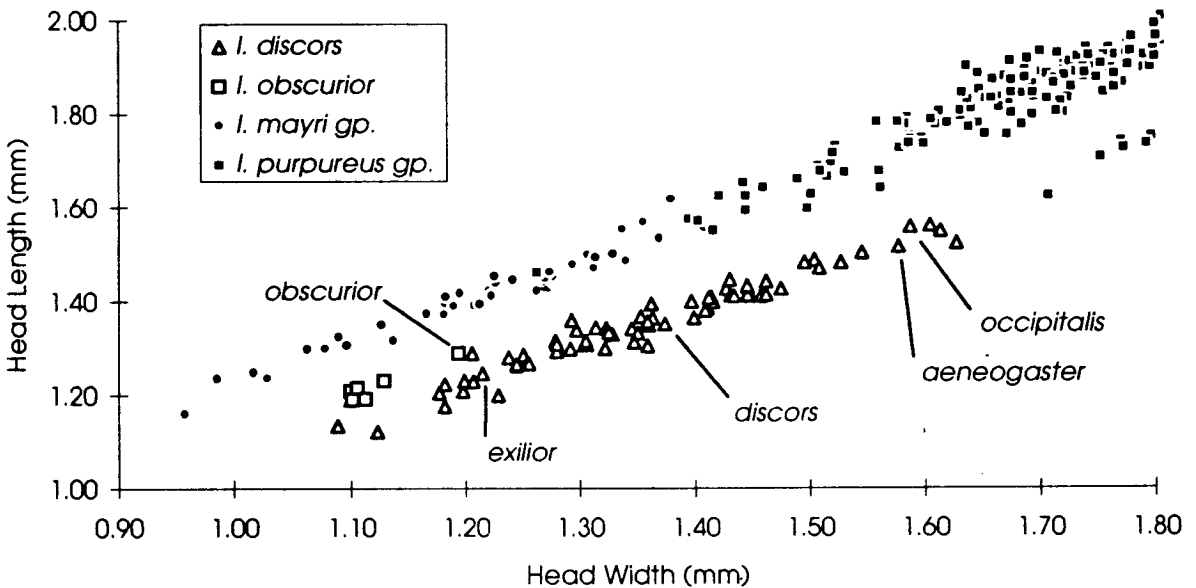


Fig. 1. Distribution of head length and width measurements (in millimetres) for *I. discors*, *I. obscurior*, *I. mayri* group and *I. purpureus* group.