



## Introduced ants in the United Arab Emirates

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Fifteen species of introduced ants, including eight cosmopolitan or tramp species, are recorded for the first time in the United Arab Emirates. They are *Cardiocondyla emeryi*, *Camponotus compressus*, *Iridomyrmex anceps*, *Linepithema humile*, *Monomorium destructor*, *Monomorium indicum*, *Pachycondyla sennaarensis*, *Paratrechina flavipes*, *Paratrechina jaegerskioeldi*, *Paratrechina longicornis*, *Pheidole teneriffana*, *Solenopsis geminata*, *Tapinoma melanocephalum*, *Tapinoma simrothi* and *Tetramorium bicarinatum*. A synopsis of their distribution, biology and pest status is given. Introduced species contribute an unusually high proportion of local ants and the ecological implications of their presence are discussed, including displacement of native fauna and impact upon human health. These ants abound in man-made, mesic environments and do not reach the characteristic sandy deserts of the region. Most invasive species are probably benign, but *P.sennaarensis*, *M.destructor* and *S.geminata* pose potential problems as public health and nuisance pests. The highly competitive *S. geminata* and *L. humile* may also threaten the local entomofauna and biodiversity.

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### Introduction

Since its formation in 1971 the United Arab Emirates (UAE) has developed rapidly. Vast areas of desert are now cultivated and there are 100,000 ha of arable land, producing 259,080 t of vegetables in 1992, and 12 million date palms and 48 million other trees (Anon, 1992). Over-use of water has resulted in a lowering of the water table and an increase in ground-water salinity (Anon, 1993). Use of desalinated water for irrigation is increasing and sewage is also used to irrigate parks and road-side plantations. Development continues and large areas of desert are being converted to