

Bull. zool. Surv. India, 5 (1) : 125-127, 1983

STUDIES ON HOUSE-HOLD INSECT-PESTS (HYMENOPTERA : FORMICIDAE)
OF SHILLONG

During a survey made to study the house-infesting ants of Shillong, the author came across 15 species of ants belonging to 12 genera under 5 sub-families. Certain species are found to be more abundant and annoying than others.

Sub-family : 1. DORYLINAE

1. *Dorylus orientalis* Westwood

The blind workers of this nomadic species, while on their onward march, sometimes invade houses. During these trips they clear away everything off their way. The damage these ants cause to the plants is already reported by Roonwal (1972). The males of this species are wasp like insects and are attracted towards the light. They are often seen coming to the houses during the months of June and July. They make their temporary nests in the soil.

Sub-family : 2. PONERINAE

2. *Odontomachus monticola* Emery

Workers of this species are often seen wandering inside the toilet rooms, especially at night. I have come across their well protected and sheltered nests in the soil near wet surroundings.

3. *Pachycondyla luteipes* (Mayr)

Workers of this species roam around the kitchen and carry away any food particles that they come across. They make their nests in the soil, often under stones or any such sheltered place.

Sub-family : 3. MYRMICINAE

4. *Aphaenogaster schurri* Forel

On rare occasions this species is seen inside the house. It makes its nests in the soil.

5. *Crematogaster biroi* Mayr

Members of this species are fond of sugary food and can easily be baited with sugar crystals. They make their nests in the soil.

6. *Crematogaster* sp.

The workers of this small, black ant are often encountered inside the kitchen and store rooms. They sap up any liquid food they get like milk, tea, starch solution and even chilly juice. It is really cute to see them lining around a drop of milk spilt on the table, with their abdomens raised up above the head-level. At such times even a mild touch on their body may not drive them away. They make their nests in the hollows of trees. Their bite is irritating.

7. *Ceratopheidole smythiesi* Forel

This species sometimes makes its nests in the lawn or under the steps of the houses, unearthing large amount of soil and disfiguring the area. At times the workers invade the kitchen and carry away grains of rice and other cooked food particles. I have observed them taking insect food of various kinds like caterpillars, beetles, bugs, grasshoppers, etc. They also feed on earthworms. They tend aphids and are real nuisance to the kitchen garden.

8. *Pheidole constanciae* Forel

This species seems to be fond of fatty and oily food. A large number of workers and the soldier forms collect over a piece of cooked meat or fish dropped on the ground. They also take bread, butter, etc. They build their nests in the soil often under stones or among the roots of the creepy grass.

9. *Tetramorium barryi* Mathew

This species is rarely seen wandering inside the house. Its food consists mainly of collembolans, dipteran larvae, aphids etc. and makes its nests in the soil, in the hollows of tree trunks and in the crevices of concrete buildings.

Sub-family : 4. FORMICINAE

10. *Camponotus compressus* (Fabricius)

The minor workers of this species wander hither and thither inside the houses. They forage on the shrubs of *Solanum* sp. taking honey from their flowers. I have come across their nests in the soil under stones or in between the roots of trees, etc.

11. *Camponotus selene* (Emery)

I have observed the workers of this ant inside the house, often at night, holding themselves firmly to the window sill of the

bathroom. They forage for honey on the flowers of *Lantana camera* and *Solanum* sp. The species makes its nests in the hollows of trees.

12. *Paratrechina* sp.

This is the species that one encounters most often inside the houses in Shillong. Like most of the other members of this sub-family, the workers of this species are also fond of sugary food. They take sugary food of any kind, and one has to take good care to keep them away from sweets. In Shillong, I have come across their nests in the soil, and in the hollows of trees. They tend aphids, but are not as mischievous as *Ceratopheidole smythiesi*.

13. *Prenolepis* sp.

Members of this species are fond of sugarcane, ripe-fruits and other sweet food. In Shillong, this species comes next to *Paratrechina* sp., in frequenting the houses. It makes its nests in the soil.

Sub-family : 5. DOLICHODERINAE

14. *Tapinoma melanocephalum* (Fabricius)

This black ant makes its nest in the hollows of trees and rarely invades the houses. It tends aphids on broad beans, but its workers are not found in so large a number as in the case of *Ceratopheidole smythiesi*.

15. *Liometopum lindgreeni* Forel

Though a forest ant, members of this species sometimes invade houses. They keep aphids.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I am grateful to Dr. B. K. Tikader, Director, Zoological Survey of India, Calcutta for permitting me to undertake the present

work and to Dr. Asket Singh, Deputy Director and Mr. C. Radhakrishnan, Zoologist, successive Officers-in-Charge, Eastern Regional Station, Zoological Survey of India, Shillong for suggestions and encouragement. My sincere thanks also to Dr. A. K. Ghosh, Deputy Director, Zoological Survey of India, Calcutta for his kind help.

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Zoological Survey of India,
Shillong-793003.

R. MATHEW

