

## ***Myrmica afghanica* (Hymenoptera: Formicidae), a new ant species from Afghanistan**

ALEXANDER RADCHENKO<sup>1</sup> & GRAHAM W. ELMES<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Museum and Institute of Zoology, Polish Academy of Sciences, 64, Wilcza str., 00-679, Warsaw, Poland;  
rad@public.icyb.kiev.ua

<sup>2</sup> Centre for ecology & Hydrology, Winfrith Technology Centre, Winfrith Newburg, Dorchester, Dorset DT2  
8ZD, United Kingdom; gwe@ceh.ac.uk

### **Abstract**

*Myrmica afghanica* sp. nov. is described and its taxonomic position is discussed in relation to the unique *Myrmica* fauna of the Himalayan region. The type specimens were taken in Afghanistan, north of Jäläläbad, in 1948. Based on three workers and a queen, it is most similar to the species of the *rubra*-group.

**Key words:** taxonomy, Palearctic Region, Himalaya, Hindu Kush, *M. tibetana*

### **Introduction**

The genus *Myrmica* is widespread in the temperate regions of the Holarctic. Currently it comprises about 150 species, although this number will surely rise when the fauna of China is better known and the Nearctic fauna is fully revised (A. Francoeur *pers. comm.*). Twenty-seven of the 30 species of *Myrmica* recorded from the south-western slopes of the Himalaya (including Afghanistan) are endemic to that region, with many species having unique and unusual combinations of morphological characters (Radchenko and Elmes 2001; see also Radchenko and Elmes 1998, 1999). The three non-endemic species were *Myrmica kozlovi* Ruzsky, *Myrmica tibetana* Mayr and *Myrmica tenuispina* Ruzsky. *M. kozlovi* has been found in Sikkim, Nepal and Tibet where it often lives at very high altitudes; we speculated that its altitude tolerance might have enabled it to cross to the western Himalaya from Tibet (Radchenko and Elmes 2001). We also confirmed that the record of *M. tenuispina* from Afghanistan was valid despite most records being from the mountains of “Middle Asia” (i.e. Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Kirgizstan and Tadzhikistan), from where it probably penetrated into Afghanistan.