



A new social parasite in the ant genus *Ectatomma* F. Smith (Hymenoptera, Formicidae, Ectatomminae)

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Abstract

Ectatomma parasiticum Feitosa & Fresneau, a new ant species socially parasitic on *Ectatomma tuberculatum* (Olivier), is described from gynes discovered in Apazapan, state of Veracruz, Mexico, and reared in the laboratory. *Ectatomma parasiticum* is the first social parasite described in the Ectatomminae. This species can be distinguished from its host by morphological and behavioral features characteristic of theinquilines known in other ant subfamilies including reduced size, thickened petiole, and agonistic interactions with host species.

Key words: Ectatomminae, *Ectatomma tuberculatum*, Social parasitism, Taxonomy, Mexico

Introduction

The ant genus *Ectatomma* includes 14 relatively large species occurring predominantly in the Neotropical Region, with the widespread species *Ectatomma tuberculatum* (Olivier) also occurring in the Nearctic Region (Bolton *et al.* 2006; Fernández & Ospina 2003). These ants occur in a variety of warm habitats, and because they are often abundant and conspicuous, they figure prominently in ecological studies (Kugler & Brown 1982). Species of *Ectatomma* are generalized predators of a variety of small arthropods and earthworms in addition to collecting honeydew from homopterous insects and nectar from plant sources (e.g. Weber 1946; Wheeler 1986; Dejean & Lachaud 1992; Pie 2004).

Instances of social parasitism in ants have a patchy taxonomic and geographic occurrence, being well known among north temperate ants in the subfamilies Formicinae and Myrmicinae (Wilson 1971; Hölldobler & Wilson 1990). Hora *et al.* (2005) demonstrated the parasitic nature of microgynes found in colonies of a Mexican population of *E. tuberculatum*. These individuals concentrate their reproductive efforts almost exclusively on the production of sexual offspring, and they are genetically distinct and reproductively isolated from their hosts.