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**The Madagascan endemic myrmicine ants related to *Eutetramorium*
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Malagidris nom. n., *Myrmisaraka* gen. n., *Royidris* gen. n., and *Vitsika* gen. n.**

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Abstract

The monophyletic group of myrmicine ant genera related to *Eutetramorium* is described and its taxonomy is documented. The group is endemic in Madagascar and contains five genera: *Eutetramorium* Emery, 1899 (3 species, 1 of which is new); *Malagidris* nom. n., a replacement name for *Brunella* Forel, 1917, junior homonym of *Brunella* Smith, G.W. 1909 (Crustacea) (6 species, 5 of which are new); *Myrmisaraka* gen. n. (2 species, both new); *Royidris* gen. n. (15 species, 11 of which are new); *Vitsika* gen. n. (14 species, all of which are new). Keys to the worker caste are provided for all genera, and provisional keys to known males are given for *Malagidris* and *Vitsika*.

Key words: Madagascar, ants, taxonomy, *Eutetramorium*, *Malagidris*, *Myrmisaraka*, *Royidris*, *Vitsika*

Introduction

In this day and age it is very uncommon to have the opportunity to study an entirely new group of ant genera in which most species are undescribed. Madagascar is one of the few places left on earth where such a myrmecological feat is still possible. This study introduces a new myrmicine group of ant genera, containing five genera and a total of 40 species (33 of which are new), found only on the island of Madagascar. Morphologically, the group spans a wide range of characters, reflecting its extensive radiation on the island, with various genera paralleling other myrmicines from elsewhere in the world. Few species within the group had been discovered and described until the present time (Table 1), when the extensive collecting activities of one of us (BLF) radically changed the situation by providing hundreds of specimens from a very wide range of habitats.

The relatively long, low postpetiole of *venustas* is also developed in *labes*, but the latter is a larger (HL 0.68–0.77, HW 0.56–0.66, SL 0.48–0.54, MfL 0.60–0.72), more darkly coloured species, in which the eyes tend to be somewhat smaller (EL/HW 0.26–0.29). In reality, the size ranges of the two form a rough continuum, with the upper limits for *venustas* constituting the lower limits for *labes*, which raises the possibility that *labes* is merely a larger morphotype of *venustas*. Contradicting this possibility is the fact that specimens of both forms have never been retrieved from a single sample, and some series of *venustas* are extensive. Consequently, the two are regarded as separate species here.

Most examples of *venustas* were retrieved from leaf litter samples in rainforest, but a few have been found in pitfall traps and yellow pan traps, and a colony was discovered in a dead twig on the ground.

Non-paratypic material examined. Madagascar: Prov. Antsiranana, P.N. Marojejy, NE Andapa (*Fisher et al.*); Prov. Toamasina, S. Ambanizana, Andranobe (*B.L. Fisher*); Prov. Toamasina, SSE Ambanizana, Andranobe (*B.L. Fisher*); Prov. Toamasina, Mont. Anjanaharibe, NNE Ambinanitelo (*Fisher et al.*); Prov. Toamasina, Anjanaharibe (*Jackson & Carpenter*); Prov. Toamasina, Mont. Akirindro, NNW Ambinanitelo (*Fisher et al.*); Prov. Toamasina, Nosy Mangabe (*P.S. Ward*); SW Antalaha (*G.D. Alpert*).

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