

**BRITISH ANTS AS AT PRESENT KNOWN, WITH SOME REMARKS,
AND A LIST OF THE SAME.**

By HORACE DONISTHORPE, F.Z.S., F.R.E.S., etc.

When studying "A Check List of British Insects" by Messrs Kloet and Hincks—a most useful, painstaking and valuable piece of work—I was reminded that for some time I have intended to publish an up-to-date list of the British *Formicidae*. As it is now nearly 20 years since the publication of the 2nd Edition of "British Ants," some alterations in the list have become necessary. I will first of all review the *Formicidae* in the above-mentioned Check List; with which I have little fault to find. Of course, it was impossible for the authors to deal with tribes, subgenera, varieties and the like; for this would have made a list dealing with over 33,000 names, far too bulky. There are, however, the following few points which, in my opinion, require correction:—

Ponera punctatissima, Roger, is noted as a casual immigrant, or adventive species. I personally regard it as not only a well-established species, but not necessarily an introduced one at all. In Botanic Gardens such as at Kew, and elsewhere, it has been probably introduced, but there are various records of its occurrence in the open. Also during the last two years I have found it in some numbers in vegetable refuse at Lampton, Middlesex, far from any houses. Holger Holgerson, in a recent paper on this ant in Norway, states as his opinion that "... the species has not been introduced in this country [Norway] or in Finland, where it—as well as in Great Britain—has been found under similar conditions. It may well be possible that colonies found in hot-houses in botanical gardens may be descended from introduced specimens (Helsingfors, Copenhagen, etc.), but indigenous colonies of the species, which in the north of Europe may be regarded as a relict from a warmer (post-glacial) epoch, may doubtless be found in nature in suitable places . . ."

Our authors point out that "a specialist in any particular group of insects always knows many things which are not yet published, and are, therefore, not common knowledge to the mass of entomologists." I would go further and say he knows many things which have been published, but if they have not been commented on, or reproduced in any known book or paper, will only be known to a very few other specialists in his own group. As a case in point, *Myrmica rubra*, L., is given as a synonym in part of both *M. laevinodis*, Nyl., and *M. ruginodis*, Nyl.; but Santschi, in 1931, gave good reasons to show that *M. ruginodis* sinks as a synonym of *M. rubra*. This I indicated in my list of the type species of ants.

Myrmica sabuleti, Mein., is incorrectly treated as a synonym of *M. scabrinodis*, Nyl. *M. sabuleti* has generally been considered as a variety of *scabrinodis*; but I now consider it, in common with other myrmecologists, to be a good species. Holger Holgerson in his excellent little book on the ants of Norway writes:—"Usually *Myrm. sabuleti* is regarded as a variety of *Myrm. scabrinodis*. In Rogaland, where I have had the occasion to observe both species very often, they have rather different habits, and this in connection with the circumstance that they always can be easily distinguished by their systematic characters, makes

me inclined to regard *Myrm. sabuleti* as just as good a species as *Myrm. scabrinodis*." With this I entirely agree.

As to *Acanthomyops* and *Lasius*, I still agree with the validity of the Erlangen List, and I do not propose to accept the name *Lasius*, F. This is, of course, a matter of opinion; and I am also aware that the International Commission on Zoological Nomenclature has decided otherwise. In view of the fact that Nomenclature still seems very slow in becoming stable, and that anyone who wants to get a name conserved appears able to do so without difficulty, I feel unable to come into line with a decision which wipes out for reasons outside Nomenclatural ones many names which are valid, acceptable, and contribute much to the stability of the Nomenclature of the Hymenoptera. These I know to be the views held by Mr Tams. I also agree with Mr Bainbrigge Fletcher when he says he declines to admit the right of Zoologists to regulate Names in Entomology.

Coming to the genus *Formica*, *F. glebaria*, Nyl., is not, of course, a synonym of *F. fusca*, L. Indeed, Emery regarded it as a subspecies, and not a variety, of *fusca*.

F. picea, Nyl., as I have pointed out before, should really be called *F. transkaukasica*, Nasonow. When I criticized the List of the British *Formicidae* published by the R. Ent. Soc. London, I unfortunately did not ask for any reprints of my paper in question. This I propose to have reprinted, and to include it with this paper, for many of the points referred to are treated at greater length, and it will thus save republishing the same matter. I must thank Mr W. H. T. Tams for kind advice on this paper. I now append a List of the British *Formicidae*; as in my judgment it should appear.

LITERATURE REFERRED TO.

- Donisthorpe, H. St. J. K. *British Ants*, 2nd Edtn., London (1927)
- "Generic Names, etc., of the British *Formicidae*," *Ent. Record.*, **49**, 131-31; 143-45 (1937).
- "A List of the Type-Species of the Genera and Subgenera of the *Formicidae*," *Ann. Mag. Nat. Hist.* (S.11), **10**, 617-737 (1943).
- Holgerson, Holger. "*Ponera punctatissima*, Rog. (Hym., Form.) funnet i Norge," *Norsk. Entom. Tidsskr.*, **6**, 183-86 (1943).
- "The Ants of Norway," *Magas. f. Naturvidens.*, **84**, 165-203 (1944).
- Kloet, G. S., and Hincks, W. D. *A Check List of British Insects* (1945).
- Santschi, F. "Notes sur le genre *Myrmica* (Latreille)," *Rev. Suisse Zool.*, **38**, 339 (1931).

(To be concluded.)

THE OCCURRENCE OF THREE MERMITHOGYNES AT ROUNDSTONE, CONNEMARA, WITH NOTES ON THE ANTS OF THE AREA.

By FERGUS J. O'ROURKE, B.Sc., F.R.E.S.

Mermithogynes are brachypterous female ants whose condition is due to the fact that they harbour in their bodies endoparasitic nematode worms of the genus *Mermis*. So far as is known the species is, in all the cases occurring in Europe, *Mermis myrmecophila*, Baylis, which was described by Baylis (1) in 1921 from specimens emerging from *Acanthomyops* (*Donisthorpea*) *niger*, L. The following specimens were