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Crematogaster bonnieae (Hymenoptera, Formicidae), a new acrobat-ant species from the Western Ghats, India

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A new species of the acrobat-ant genus *Crematogaster*, *C. bonnieae*, is described from the Western Ghats, India based on workers. The morphology of the new species is fairly distinguishable from other congeners by the following combination of characters: relatively large eyes; long antennal scapes, surpassing posterior head margin; propodeal spines reduced, tuberculate; 11-segmented antennae, and 3-segmented club. An identification key to the 33 Indian species/subspecies of *Crematogaster* is also provided.

Introduction

The mega diverse ant genus Crematogaster Lund, 1831, also known as, one of the 'giant genera of ants' (Bolton 1995), is currently represented by 519 extant species, 260 subspecies and 3 extinct species (see https://www.antweb. org). Roughly distributed between latitudes of ~50°N and ~40°S ranges, Crematogaster has the highest diversity recorded in tropical, subtropical, and savannah habitats of the Neotropical and the Palaeotropical regions, and warmer temperate climates of the southern Holarctic region (Blaimer 2012a). Despite their impressive diversity and ecological significance, the Crematogaster is one of the taxonomically neglected, hyper-diverse ant genus with majority of species poorly described (Sharaf et al. 2019). With a unique connection of the postpetiole to the dorsal surface of the gaster (an acrobat position), these species are easily identified, but species delimitation is less clearly demarcated with remarkable intraspecific variations. However, numerous infraspecific names based on slight variation have further burdened the taxonomy of the genus with already 326 synonyms, 13 homonyms, 17 unavailable names, 204 obsolete combinations, and 1 unavailable misspelling (Brown 1973, Blaimer 2012a; see also http://antcat.org).

Traditionally the genus consisted of 13 subgenera, which were recently revisited and merged into two: *Crematogaster* Lund, 1831, *sensu stricto* (with few circumscribed species-groups) and *Orthocrema* Santschi, 1918 (Blaimer 2012a, 2012b). The comprehensive studies of Blaimer (2012a, 2012b), in addition to clearing the subgeneric confusion, also highlighted the existing knowledge gaps among the Asian species and signified need for further studies. The Asian region, however, a vast composite of the eastern part of

the Palaearctic, the Oriental, and the western part of the Indo Australian regions (Hosoishi & Ogata 2009a), will require much work for framing general idea about the actual diversity of the genus. With recent revisions of *Crematogaster* in some parts of South East Asia their knowledge has improved. However, on the whole, the genus is in a dire need of a global revision in general and for the Asian region in particular (Hosoishi & Ogata 2008, 2009b, 2015, 2017).

Here, we describe a new species which we placed within the subgenus Crematogaster sensu stricto characterised by petiole moderately flared in dorsal view, postpetiole bilobed, having a broad distinct median impression, propodeal spiracle circular (not oval or compressed oval as it should be for the subgenus), occipital carinae reduced, antennae 11-segmented, with 3-segmented club (Blaimer 2012a). The new species appears distinct with reduced propodeal spines and seems uncommon in the Western Ghats range, since it was not encountered from any other locality. We also provide a list of the known Indian species of the genus, and a key to facilitate species identification. We recognise 33 valid species/subspecies including the new one described herein.

Material and methods

The specimens were collected by hand picking. Morphological analysis was conducted using a Nikon SMZ 1500 stereo zoom microscope. For digital images, an MP evolution digital camera was mounted on the same microscope and the Auto-Montage (Syncroscopy, Division of Synoptics, Ltd.) software was used. Description and morphological terminology for measurements and indices follow Blaimer (2010) and Blaimer and Fisher (2013) and include:

CI = cephalic index: HW/HL.

EL = eye length (measured along the maximum diameter).

HL = head length (perpendicular distance from line tangent to rearmost points of vertex margin to line tangent to anterior most projections of clypeus, in full face view).

HW = maximum head width including eyes in full face view.

LBI = leg/body index: WL/LHT.

LHT = length of metatibia, excluding the proximomedial condyle.

OI = ocular index: EL/HL.

PPL = postpetiole length; measured in dorsal view at an angle that maximizes length.

PPI = postpetiole width index: PPW/PPL.

PPW = postpetiole width; measured in same view as and perpendicular to postpetiole length.

PTH = petiole height; measured in lateral view as vertical distance from ventral margin to highest point of dorsoposterior margin.

PTHI = petiole height index: PTH/PTL.

PTL = petiole length; measured in lateral view as the distance from dorsoposterior margin of segment to anterior inflection point where petiole curves up to condyle.

PTW = petiole width (maximum width of petiole in dorsal view).

PTWI = petiole width index: PTW/PTL.

SI = scape index: SL/HW.

SL = scape length (length of scape shaft from apex to basal flange, not including basal condyle and neck; if scape is strongly arched, this measurement is taken as the chord length from the basal flange to the apex).

SPI = propodeal spine index: SPL/WL.

SPL = propodeal spine length (measured from tip of propodeal spine to closest point on outer rim of propodeal spiracle, maximizing spine length in lateral view).

WL = Weber's length (measured in lateral view of mesosoma, distance from approximate inflection point, where downward sloping pronotum curves into anteriorly projecting neck, to posteroventral propodeal lobes).

Other abbreviation: PUAC = Punjabi University Patiala, Ant Collection, Punjab, India.

Crematogaster (Crematogaster) bonnieae sp. nov. (Fig. 1)

MATERIAL EXAMINED. **Holotype**: worker (PUAC0015). India. Kerala, Periyar Tiger Reserve, Manalar, 9°35′N, 77°18′E, 1630 m a.s.l., 24 October 2011, hand collected, leg. Shahid A. Akbar. **Paratypes**: 2 workers (PUAC0016, PUAC0017), same data as holotype.

ETYMOLOGY: The specific epithet is a Latinized noun in genitive, derived from the first name of Bonnie B. Blaimer in honour of her significant contributions to studies of the



Fig. 1. Crematogaster bonnieae sp. nov. - A: Head, frontal view. - B: Habitus, lateral view. - C: Habitus, dorsal view. - D: Type locality (photo by Lakshmi Chandrakanth).

genus. The word 'bonnie' is also coincidentally a Scots English dialect word meaning 'pretty' or 'beautiful', which seems appropriate in respect of the new species.

DIAGNOSIS. The new species differs from its congeners by the following combination of characters: relatively large eyes (OI = 0.28-0.29); long antennal scapes (0.86-0.87 mm), surpassing posterior head margin; propodeal spines reduced, tuberculate; 11-segmented antennae, and 3-segmented club. Worker measurements (mm, n = 3; given are ranges; holotype measurements in parentheses): HW = 0.66-0.68 (0.67), HL = 0.68-0.70 (0.70), EL = 0.20-0.21 (0.20),SL = 0.58-0.59 (0.58), WL = 0.75-0.78 (0.76), SPL = 0.03 - 0.04(0.04),PTH = 0.15 - 0.16(0.16), PTL = 0.19-0.20 (0.20), PTW = 0.24-0.25 (0.24), PPL = 0.12-0.13 (0.13), PPW = 0.20-0.21 (0.21), LHT = 0.57-0.60 (0.59), CI = 0.96-0.97 (0.96), OI = 0.28-0.29 (0.29), SI = 0.86-0.87 (0.87), SPI = 0.04-0.05 (0.05), PTHI = 0.79-0.80 (0.80), PTWI = 1.20-1.26 (1.20), PPI = 1.61-1.66 (1.62), LBI = 1.29-1.31 (1.29).

Description. Small sized species (HW = 0.66–0.68 mm, WL = 0.75–0.78 mm); head almost as long as broad, sides converging anteriorly and posteriorly (CI = 0.97), rounded, posterior margins straight, occipital carina reduced with weakly defined ridge; antennae 11-segmented, in full-face view antennal scape when laid back surpasses posterior margin of head; masticatory margin of mandibles with four teeth; anterior clypeal margin straight to slightly concave; eyes relatively large (OI = 0.28–0.29), protruding, located above the mid-length of head in full-face view with ca. 20 ommatidia in the longest row.

In lateral view, pronotum, angular; promesonotum demarcated, promesonotal suture distinct, pronotum raised, mesonotum dome shaped and moderately convex; in dorsal view, promesonotum dome shaped with median mesonotal carina present; metanotal groove well developed; propodeal dorsum flat, short; propodeal declivity truncate, propodeal spines reduced, tuberculate; propodeal spiracle distinct, circular; petiole in lateral view distinctly longer than high (PTHI = 0.79–0.80, PTWI = 1.20–1.26); in dorsal view slightly broader anteriorly than posteriorly; angulate, dorsoposterior tubercules feebly marked; subpetiolar process absent; post-

petiole node bilobed, merely impressed in dorsal view; slightly higher than petiole in lateral view; subpetiolar process absent.

Cephalic surface with fine pale hairs scattered throughout; anterior clypeal margin and mandibles with several long setae; posterior half of clypeus without setae; antennae and legs with abundant pubescence, mostly appressed with several erect setae also present; mesosoma dorsally with several long setae, small and several long setae also present on propodeum, declivity smooth and shiny; petiole with dorsoposterior erect setae, postpetiole with few pairs of posteriorly directed setae, in addition to appressed pubescence; gaster with abundant short erect setae, and regular appressed to decumbent pubescence.

Cephalic surface mostly smooth with few striations present near antennal fossae and gena; clypeal surface smooth; mandibles longitudinally striate; mesometanotum, propodeum laterally, and pronotum dorsally longitudinally striate, emarginate along the margins; propodeal declivity smooth; petiole and postpetiole imbricate; gastral tergites faintly imbricate.

Head and mesosoma brownish orange, gaster dark brown.

DISTRIBUTION AND HABITAT: Type locality, Upper Manalar, part of Periyar Tiger Reserve is one of the border regions between Kerala and Tamil Nadu. It includes about 49 km² of protected forest area, forming a fascinating green hill landscape. One side of the hill is covered by completely intact forest, while commercial tea gardens of Tamil Nadu are on its other side (Fig. 1D). Several rare ant species have been previously reported from the region (Bharti & Akbar 2013, 2014a, 2014b, Dad et al. 2019). The specimens were collected from a tree branch while moving downward. The occurrence of foraging individuals was low and this species seems uncommon in the Western Ghats, since it was not encountered again from any other locality.

Remarks. Among the known Indian species, *Crematogaster bonnieae* appears distinct with its reduced propodeal spines, 11-segmented antennae and the relatively larger eyes (OI = 0.28–0.29). It is similar to African *C. sewellii* Forel, 1891, but differs from it in having straight posterior margin of head; propodeal spines tuber-

culate; basal level portion of metanotum longitudinally striate; petiole broadly oval, dorsolaterally angulate, dorsoposterior tubercules present and postpetiole bilobed, merely impressed posteriorly (C. sewellii has posterior margin of head weakly concave; propodeal spines mainly absent; basal level portion of metanotum smooth; petiole weakly flared, dorsolaterally rounded, without posterolateral tubercules; postpetiole bilobed with a broad median impression). The invasive C. subdentata Mayr, 1877, also appears to resemble the new species in having reduced propodeal spines and similar body colouration but it can be easily separated from C. subdentata by abundant body hairs, flared petiole, pointed subpetiolar process and raised propodeum.

Key to the Indian species of *Crematogaster* **based on worker caste** (modified from Bingham 1903, Hosoishi & Ogata 2008, 2009a, 2009b, 2012, 2019, Blaimer 2012a, Hosoishi 2015, 2020)

- Maxillary and labial palp segments in workers not reduced usually 5, 3. Ridge separating the lateral and ventral portions of the mesopleuron distinct. Pronotum

- 4. Scape with abundant setae. Propodeal spiracles large; diameter ca. 2 × as large as mesothoracic spiracles 5

- 7. Propodeal spines short; their length equal to or shorter

- mented antennal club; postpetiole weakly bilobed 9
 8. Undeveloped occipital carina not forming a distinct ridge; 2-segmented antennal club; postpetiole strongly

- 12. Strongly sculptured body; metanotal groove deep; post-petiole distinctly bilobed; body setae stout; mandible with four teeth; 3-segmented antennal club; propodeal spines developed; petiole broader anteriorly (rothneyi

| | Head smooth and shining, at most with fine striae 16 |
|-----|--|
| 15. | Head entirely sculptured |
| 16. | Propodeal spines short |
| | Propodeal spines relatively long |
| 17 | Propodeal spines slender, not thick at base C. subnudo |
| 17 | Propodeal spines thick at base |
| | Propodeal spines cone shaped, straight |
| | |
| 18. | Propodeal spines horn shaped, down curved (brunned |
| | species complex) |
| | [C. brunnea is a complex species group consisting of |
| | six species. General characters are reddish brown col- |
| | ouration, head smooth and shining with faint striations |
| | near base of antennae and gena, head wider than the |
| | mesosoma, the vertex slightly emarginated; mesosoma |
| | in lateral view finely striated longitudinally, metanotum |
| | |
| | deeply concave with acute spine; petiole heart shaped |
| | flattened above; postpetiole globose and biturberculate |
| | dorsally; gaster smooth and shining. C. b. contemta is a |
| | light bicoloured yellowish subspecies with darker brown |
| | gaster, propodeal spines small sharply pointed, thick a |
| | the base, directed downward. C. b. nicevillei is a darke |
| | subspecies with smaller spines, deep metanotal groove |
| | raised mesonotum and faintly striate gena. C. b. nilgirica |
| | is restricted to southern India with prominent striations |
| | on head and mesosomal dorsum, propodeal spines large |
| | |
| | diverging, fronto clypeal sulcus more or less pointed |
| | C. b. rabula is a dull brownish coloured subspecies |
| | with pronotum and propodeum dorsally feebly striate |
| | propodeal spines short, pointed, thick at base diverging |
| | outwards. C. b. ruginota is a light yellowish brown col- |
| | oured subspecies with deep metanotal groove, strongly |
| | raised pro- and mesonotum, propodeal declivity trun- |
| | cate, popodeal spines smaller, pointed, thick at base |
| | directed upward] |
| 19. | |
| 17. | nally striate; propodeal spines larger and thicker |
| | |
| | |
| 19. | Blackish brown species; mesosomal dorsum reticulate |
| | propodeal spines smaller and thinner |
| 20. | Pronotum flat dorsally, rounded anteriorly; pro-mesono- |
| | tal suture obsolete; mesonotum medially depressed |
| | |
| 20. | |
| | suture prominent; mesonotum medially raised |
| | |
| 21 | Propodeal spines reduced, tuberculate |
| 41. | |
| 2.1 | C. bonnieae sp. nov |
| | Propodeal spines well-developed, never tuberculate 22 |
| | Pronotum sculptured |
| | Pronotum not sculptured, smooth |
| | Basal portion of metanotum sculptured 24 |
| 23. | Basal portion of metanotum smooth C. politula |
| | Dark coloured with dense pilosity; propodeal spines |
| | longer |
| 24 | Light coloured with reduced pilosity; propodeal spines |
| | smaller |
| 25 | Propodeal spines distinctly longer than metanotum; mes |
| ۷٥. | |
| 3.5 | osoma finely sculptured |
| 25. | Propodeal spines short; mesosoma strongly sculptured |
| | |
| | |

- Light brown species; petiole heart shaped; postpetiole globular, abdomen smooth not striate longitudinally ... 28
- 27. Dorsum of petiole strongly angular; pronotum rugose ... *C. dohrni*

Discussion

Bharti et al. (2016) mentioned the presence of 41 Crematogaster species in India. Of these, three taxa — C. aitkenii Forel, 1902, C. biroi smythiesii Forel, 1902, and C. urvijae Bharti, 2003 — are now junior synonyms of C. biroi Mayr, 1897, whereas C. rothneyi civa Forel, 1902, is a junior synonym of C. rothneyi Mayr, 1879, (Hosoishi & Ogata 2016, 2019). The original descriptions of three species C. abdominalis Motschoulsky, 1863, C. diffusa (Jerdon, 1851) and C. rufa (Jerdon, 1851) are exceedingly inadequate and their type material is apparently lost. Moreover, many taxa described by Jerdon and Motschoulsky are invalid and have been synonymized or treated as incertae sedis (Kerzhner & Jansson 1985, Wachkoo & Bharti 2014). In view of the lack of sufficient information to ascertain their status and with no type material or type images available, authors argue for their doubtful status and consider them species inquirenda. Further, no occurrence records of C. betapicalis Bolton, 1995, are currently known from modern India. Previous Indian occurrence citations (e.g., Smith 1878, Bharti et al. 2016) refer to the type locality, Jhelum Valley (Punjab Hills), which was located in pre-partition British India but is now part of Pakistan. With these exclusions the number of valid Crematogaster species/subspecies in India is reduced to 33 (see Table 1).

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| | Table 1. Distrib | ution of Crei | matogaster st | pecies in | India. |
|--|------------------|---------------|---------------|-----------|--------|
|--|------------------|---------------|---------------|-----------|--------|

| Species | Distribution in India |
|--|---|
| Crematogaster aberrans Forel, 1892 | Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Gujarat, Haryana, Karnataka, Kerala, Maharashtra, Nagaland, Sikkim, West Bengal |
| Crematogaster anthracina Smith, 1857 | Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir, Karnataka, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Punjab, Sikkim, Tamil Nadu, Uttarakhand, West Bengal |
| Crematogaster binghamii Forel, 1904 | Arunachal Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir, Sikkim, Uttarakhand, West Bengal |
| Crematogaster biroi Mayr, 1897 | Arunachal Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir, Karnataka, Meghalaya, Odisha, Punjab, Sikkim, Uttarakhand, West Bengal |
| Crematogaster brunnea Smith, 1857 | Tamil Nadu |
| Crematogaster brunnea contemta Mayr, 1879 | Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Gujarat, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Nagaland, Punjab, Rajasthan, Sikkim, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal |
| Crematogaster brunnea nicevillei Emery, 1922 | Sikkim, West Bengal |
| Crematogaster brunnea nilgirica Emery, 1922 | Tamil Nadu, West Bengal |
| Crematogaster brunnea rabula Forel, 1902 | Karnataka, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal |
| Crematogaster brunnea ruginota Santschi, 1928 | Madhya Pradesh, West Bengal |
| Crematogaster buddhae Forel, 1902 | Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Arunachal Pradesh, Delhi, Kerala, |
| Crematogaster dalyi Forel, 1902 | Manipur, Sikkim, West Bengal Haryana, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal |
| Crematogaster dalyri olei, 1902 Crematogaster dohrni Mayr, 1879 | Haryana, Karnataka, Kerala, Manipur, Tamil Nadu, Tripura |
| Crematogaster dohini Mayı, 1879 Crematogaster dohrni artifex Mayı, 1879 | Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Arunachal Pradesh, Karnataka, |
| Crematogaster domini anthex mays, 1079 | Meghalaya |
| Crematogaster ebenina Forel, 1902 | Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Karnataka, Kerala, Maharashtra, |
| oromatoguoter obormia i oros, rooz | Manipur, Nagaland, Sikkim, West Bengal |
| Crematogaster flava Forel, 1886 | Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, |
| | Himachal Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir, Karnataka, Kerala, |
| | Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Odisha, Sikkim, |
| | Tamil Nadu, Tripura, Uttarakhand, West Bengal |
| Crematogaster himalayana Forel, 1902 | Himachal Pradesh, Manipur |
| Crematogaster hodgsoni Forel, 1902 | Haryana, Karnataka, Meghalaya |
| Crematogaster inflata Smith, 1857 | Manipur |
| Crematogaster kirbii (Sykes, 1835) | Maharashtra |
| Crematogaster perelegans Forel, 1902 | Himachal Pradesh, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Punjab, Tamil Nadu |
| Crematogaster politula Forel, 1902 | Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir, Meghalaya, Sikkim, West Bengal |
| Crematogaster pradipi Tiwari, 1999 | Tamil Nadu |
| Crematogaster ransonneti Mayr, 1868 | Haryana, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Sikkim, West Bengal |
| Crematogaster rogenhoferi Mayr, 1879 | Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Goa, Jammu & Kashmir, Karnataka, Kerala, Maharashtra, Manipur, Meghalaya, Sikkim, Tamil Nadu, Uttarakhand, West Bengal |
| Crematogaster rothneyi Mayr, 1879 | Bihar, Goa, Gujarat, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Kerala, Maharashtra, Meghalaya, Odisha, Punjab, Rajasthan, Sikkim, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal |
| Crematogaster sagei Forel, 1902 | Arunachal Pradesh, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir Sikkim, Uttarakhand, West Bengal |
| Crematogaster sagei laevinota Forel, 1902 | Himachal Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh |
| Crematogaster sikkimensis Forel, 1904 | Sikkim, West Bengal |
| Crematogaster subnuda Mayr, 1879 | Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Delhi, Goa, Gujarat, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Odisha, Punjab, Sikkim, |
| Cromotogastor travangorosais Forel 1000 | Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, West Bengal |
| Crematogaster travancorensis Forel, 1902 Crematogaster walshi Forel, 1902 | Kerala, Manipur, Meghalaya, West Bengal Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, |
| Oremalogaster waishi i otel, 1902 | Odisha, Sikkim, West Bengal |
| Crematogaster wroughtonii Forel, 1902 | Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Haryana, Karnataka, Kerala, |
| | Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal |

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