

A NEW SPECIES OF ANT (HYMENOPTERA: FORMICIDAE) FROM NORTH FLORIDA¹

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ABSTRACT: A new species of dacetine ant, *Pyramica apalachicolensis*, is described. Specimens were found in poorly drained, fire-maintained flatwoods with an open canopy of large pines and dense herbaceous ground cover in the Apalachicola National Forest of Florida. Diagnostic features of the species are the cuneiform head, the conspicuous mandibular diastema, and the long, fine, sparse, suberect, slightly recurved clypeal hairs. It is generally similar to several of the other 26 species of *Pyramica* native to southeastern North America.

The genus *Pyramica* includes 26 described native species in southeastern North America, which is apparently a center of distribution of Arctotertiary elements of the genus (Deyrup and Cover 1998). It is the most speciose genus of southeastern ants, but the small size (workers are about 2mm in length) and cryptic habits of the species guarantee their obscurity. There is no satisfactory way to survey for these ants: they can be found by minutely examining leaf litter, or by extraction with a Berlese funnel or a similar device, but processing large quantities of leaf litter in these ways is a laborious process. Scarce species and those that occur in some unknown special microhabitat are likely to be overlooked. The species described below may be a good example of a species that has escaped notice by occurring in an unlikely habitat. It was discovered during a study of ant assemblages in low pine flatwoods, a habitat that is prone to both fire and flooding, phenomena inimical to most litter-inhabiting ants. Two specimens were found in pitfall traps, and an intensive search of the area around these pitfall traps yielded a nest with 332 individuals.

For a formal diagnosis of the genus *Pyramica* and the reasons for placing the genus *Smithistruma* in synonymy with *Pyramica* see Bolton 1999. For a key to the genera of Nearctic ants, see Hölldobler and Wilson (1990); in this key most members of the genus *Pyramica* will key out to *Smithistruma*.

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Diagnosis. Distinguished from all other Nearctic *Pyramica* by the following combination of character states: head with preocular laminae convergent distally, so head in frontal view roughly cuneiform; mandibles with a conspicuous diastema between the triangular basal tooth and the subapical series of teeth; marginal and discal hairs of clypeus sparse, long, filiform, slightly recurved.

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