



Acrobat Ant

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Scientific Name

Hymenoptera: Formicidae, *Crematogaster* spp.

Size

1/8" (2 to 3 mm)

Color

Reddish brown to black.



Pinned acrobat ant .

Courtesy of Texas A&M University.



Acrobat ant with gaster raised in a defensive position.

Lois Swoboda, 2002

Description

Acrobat ants are often very shiny. Some common species have a 'patent leather' look. The final segment, or gaster, of the ant appears heart-shaped when viewed from above. This ant is known as the acrobat ant because, when frightened, a worker raises the tip of its abdomen up over its head. Individual acrobat ants may occasionally be seen foraging near a source of food or water. This ant, unlike some other common pest species, does not generally form long lines of foragers.

Habitat

These ants may be found both indoors and outdoors. They will not colonize wood that is in sound condition, but frequently nest in dead or decaying wood. Outdoors they are frequently found nesting in logs, stumps, and hollow tree cavities. They also nest beneath tarps, leaf litter, stones, or anyplace where the soil is likely to be damp.

Infestations of acrobat ants are generally associated with homes constructed on wooded lots or adjacent to forestland. When nesting in structures, acrobat ants are usually associated with moist or rotting wood and are frequently found in window frames or adjacent to downspouts. They may create cavities in wood kept damp by leaks or condensation from plumbing fixtures. Acrobat ants have also been known to nest in foam board or insulation, especially if it is damp.

Life Cycle

Like all ants, this species has a complex life cycle developing from eggs into white legless larvae then pupae before emerging as adults. Development from egg to pupa takes place within the nest and immatures are rarely seen. Like all ant species, acrobat ants pro-

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duce winged individuals known as swarmers. Swarmers are fertile adult males and females whose only function is to reproduce and found new colonies. They do not forage for food, bite, or sting. The males (drones) and females (queens) emerge, take flight, and mate while in flight. The females then land, shed their wings and seek soft soil in which to create a nest. The males die shortly after mating. Acrobat ant swarmers usually emerge in the fall although flights have been observed as early as June.

Type of Damage

Acrobat ants can be nuisance pests in and around structures. The workers can be aggressive if disturbed and may sting or bite. Some species also produce a foul odor.

This ant prefers to forage outside. Workers may travel over 100 feet from the nest in search of food. Acrobat ants feed on a variety of foods including sweets and other insects. They have frequently been observed feeding on termites.

Structural damage associated with this ant is minimal. Occasionally, this ant will expel fine frass (a sawdust like excrement) from the nest, which cause homeowners

concern. As has already been stated, acrobat ants may nest in rotting or water-damaged wood. Acrobat ants do not attack sound wood. The presence of these ants in structures is often indicative of a moisture problem related to a leak or condensation.

Control

Nonchemical

Ants may be excluded from the structure by sealing exterior cracks and other points of entry. Moving woodpiles, lumber, and other potential nest sites away from the structure may also aid in control.

If this ant is found nesting in wall voids, there is often a leak or other source of moisture present. Eliminating the source of the moisture will generally eliminate the infestation. In some cases, it may be advisable to replace the moisture-damaged wood.

Chemical

In case of a persistent infestation, it may be necessary to treat inner wall voids with silica aero-gel, boric acid, or a pyrethroid dust formulation labeled for use against ants. It may be necessary to drill holes in affected walls to apply this treatment.



Acrobat ants nesting in a wooden stake previously damaged by termites.

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