

## SCIENTIFIC NOTE

Occurrence of *Atta robusta* Borgmeier (Hymenoptera: Formicidae) in the North of Espírito Santo State, BrazilMARCOS C. TEIXEIRA<sup>1</sup>, JOSÉ H. SCHOEREDER<sup>2</sup> AND JÚLIO N.C. LOUZADA<sup>3</sup><sup>1</sup>Depto. Biologia Animal; <sup>2</sup>Depto. Biologia Geral. Universidade Federal de Viçosa, 36571-000, Viçosa, MG<sup>3</sup>Depto. Biologia, Universidade Federal de Lavras, C. postal 37, 37200-000, Lavras, MG*Neotropical Entomology* 33(2):265-266 (2004)Ocorrência de *Atta robusta* Borgmeier (Hymenoptera: Formicidae) no Norte do Espírito Santo

RESUMO - *Atta robusta* Borgmeier foi descrita como endêmica da Baixada Fluminense, Rio de Janeiro. No entanto, os poucos estudos sobre a espécie não são concordantes quanto a sua distribuição geográfica. A presente nota comunica a ocorrência de *A. robusta* nas restingas da Ilha de Guriri, norte do Espírito Santo. Esse novo dado permite afirmar que *A. robusta* não é endêmica da Baixada Fluminense, estando distribuída pelo menos nas restingas dos estados do Rio de Janeiro e Espírito Santo.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Saúva, endemismo, restinga

ABSTRACT - *Atta robusta* Borgmeier has been described as an endemic species from the lowlands of Rio de Janeiro State. However, the scarce studies carried out with species disagree in relation to its geographic distribution. In this note we describe the occurrence of *A. robusta* in the "restingas" of Guriri Island, north of Espírito Santo State. This occurrence makes clear that *A. robusta* is not endemic from Rio de Janeiro State, being distributed at least in "restingas" in Rio de Janeiro and Espírito Santo states.

KEY WORDS: Leaf-cutting ant, endemism, coastal ecosystem

Ant species of the genus *Atta*, known as leaf-cutting ants, occur in the Americas from the South of the United States (parallel 33°N) to Argentina (parallel 33°S) (Mariconi 1970). Within this range the higher species concentration occurs in the subtropical region (Fowler & Claver 1991), where some species are restricted to some geographic areas. This seems to occur with the species *Atta robusta* Borgmeier (1939), which has been described as endemic in the Rio de Janeiro state lowlands. However, the scarce studies on this genus diverge in relation to its geographical distribution. According to Mariconi (1970) this species occurs near the Brazilian coast, whereas Gonçalves & Nunes (1984) indicate its occurrence in Rio de Janeiro littoral, from São João da Barra (21°S, 41° W) to "Restinga da Marambaia" (23°S, 44°W). Recent studies by Fowler (1995) and Fowler *et al.* (1996) reaffirm *A. robusta* endemism, suggesting that this species is at extinction due to human-made disturbances. This note gives new data on *A. robusta* distribution, communicating its occurrence in Guriri Island, North of Espírito Santo state.

The occurrence of *A. robusta* was noticed in a study of ant communities in the restinga vegetation (to be published elsewhere), a vegetation type that occurs along most Brazilian coast. Thirty nests of this leaf-cutting ant species were found inside the Municipal Protection Area of Conceição da Barra

(18°25'S, 39°42'W), all in the restinga vegetation known as Myrtaceae thicket (Henriques *et al.* 1984). This vegetation is easily differentiated from the other physiognomies composing restinga vegetation because it has a higher plant cover, made up by trees up to 20 m high, most of them of the family Myrtaceae (Araújo & Henriques 1984).

We collected major workers in all the 30 nests for identification according to Mariconi (1970), and the identification was confirmed by three specialists not involved in the present study. After this confirmation, specimens were deposited in the following collections: Museu de Entomologia, Universidade Federal de Viçosa (Viçosa, Minas Gerais); Centro de Pesquisas do Cacau (CEPLAC, Ilhéus, Bahia); Museu de Zoologia, Universidade de São Paulo (São Paulo, São Paulo); Museu Nacional (Rio de Janeiro, Rio de Janeiro).

The observed nests presented the same external characteristics described by Fowler (1995) and Fowler *et al.* (1996), being superficial and more spread than the nests of other *Atta* species.

It is possible that *A. robusta* has a larger distribution in Brazilian restingas, and its distribution is ignored due to the lack of entomological studies in such environments. The ambiguity of available data in the literature and the insufficient knowledge about this species justify the importance of new

studies on its relation with restinga systems. Other studies, on geographic distribution and the processes conditioning *A. robusta* local distribution, are presently being carried out by the authors.

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