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A Tropical Ant Temporarily Established in Iowa

ROBERT L. KING

Cosmopolitan tramp species of ants have been widely disseminated by man. About a dozen species have been introduced and are found in dwellings, greenhouses, nurseries and in and around urban communities in the southern and eastern parts of the United States. One of these, the Argentine ant, *Iridomyrmex humilis* Mayr, has become a serious pest in the southern states from Florida to California. It has also spread throughout the tropics and has in many areas replaced both native species and other earlier introduced species.

Only one introduced species, the cosmopolitan Pharaoh's ant, *Monomorium pharaonis* (Linn), has been reported from Iowa (Buren, 1944), but this species is a house pest only, since it apparently does not live out-of-doors this far north. Two additional species have been reported from the Chicago area: the pavement ant, *Tetramorium cespitum* (Linn) and the Argentine ant, *Iridomyrmex humilis* Mayr (Gregg, 1944).

Early in October, 1947, some small ants were noticed in an Iowa City grocery store where their foraging columns were quite conspicuous. They were collected and determined as the tropicopolitan *Tapinoma melanocephalum* (Fabr) which had been introduced into Florida. It is probable that it was brought into Iowa City in vegetable or fruit shipments. The ants were still quite numerous on December 18, 1947, but since that time they have not been seen although weekly searches have been made. This species has very pale yellowish mandibles, antennae and legs to distinguish it from the larger, native odorous house ant, *Tapinoma sessile* (Say), which is darker throughout (Smith, 1928). Both of these species together with the Argentine ant are characterized by the presence of great numbers of small queens in a single nest, the habit of forming new colonies by swarming and the apparent lack of antagonism among different colonies of the same species. Thus they possess the equipment for expansion to wherever conditions are such that they can survive.

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