**Pheidole megacephala**

**System:** Terrestrial

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kingdom</th>
<th>Phylum</th>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Order</th>
<th>Family</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Animalia</td>
<td>Arthropoda</td>
<td>Insecta</td>
<td>Hymenoptera</td>
<td>Formicidae</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Common name**
Grosskopfameise (German), big-headed ant (English), coastal brown-ant (English), brown house-ant (English), lion ant (English)

**Synonym**
- Myrmica trinodis, Losana 1834
- Formica megacephala, Fabricius 1793
- Formica edax, Forskal 1775
- Oecophthorana perniciosa, Gerstacker 1859
- Oecophthorana pusilla, Heer 1852
- Myrmica suspiciosa, Smith 1859
- Atta testacea, Smith 1858
- Pheidole janus, F. Smith
- Pheidole laevigata, Mayr
- Myrmica laevigata, F. Smith

**Similar species**

**Summary**
Pheidole megacephala is one of the world's worst invasive ant species. Believed to be native to southern Africa, it is now found throughout the temperate and tropical zones of the world. It is a serious threat to biodiversity through the displacement of native invertebrate fauna and is a pest of agriculture as it harvests seeds and harbours phytophagous insects that reduce crop productivity. Pheidole megacephala are also known to chew on irrigation and telephone cabling as well as electrical wires.

[view this species on IUCN Red List]
Species Description
It is a small ant (minor workers approximately 2mm long and major workers 3-4mm long), ranging in colour from a pale yellow to a very dark brown. The first antennal segment (scape) of the minor workers far exceeds the top of the head, and is covered in many long hairs. There are no spines on the front of the body (pronotum), but two very small spines on the rear of the body (propodeum) facing almost directly up. There are many small punctations on the rear side of the body, and side of the head, but remaining body areas are smooth and shiny. The entire body is covered in many sparse, long hairs. The second waist segment (post petiole) is conspicuously swollen.

Please click on AntWeb: Pheidole megacephala for more images and assistance with identification. The AntWeb image comparison tool lets you compare images of ants at the subfamily, genus, species or specimen level. You may also specify which types of images you would like to compare: head, profile, dorsal, or label. Please see PaDIL (Pests and Diseases Image Library) Species Content Page Ants: Coastal brown-ant for high quality diagnostic and overview images. Please follow this link for a fully illustrated Lucid key to common invasive ants [Hymenoptera: Formicidae] of the Pacific Island region [requires the most recent version of Java installed]. The factsheet on Pheidole megacephala contains an overview, diagnostic features, comparison charts, images, nomenclature and links. (Sarnat, 2008)

Lifecycle Stages
This ant has a complete life-cycle, and developmental time and longevity of each stage is highly dependent on temperature. Incubation time of eggs ranges from 13-32 days. Duration of the larval stage ranges from 23-29 days. Duration of the pupal stage ranges from 10-20+ days. Lifespans of minor workers have been shown to be 78 days at 21C, and 38 days at 27C.

Reproduction
Sexual reproduction by fertile queens. Insemination of virgin queens occurs once within the parent colony, then the male dies. Reproduction is year-round, but would vary according to climatic conditions of each locality. Queens have been documented to lay up to 292 eggs per month.

Nutrition
Omnivorous. Will capture and kill invertebrates and small vertebrates (e.g. bird hatchlings). Harvests seeds, and tends phytophagous insects. General scavenger.

General Impacts
This ant displaces most native invertebrate faunas directly through aggression, and as such is a serious threat to biodiversity. Evidence also exists of reductions in vertebrate populations where this ant is extremely abundant. Effects on plants and horticultural crops can be direct through the likes of seed harvesting, or indirect through the likes of harbouring phytophagous insects which reduce plant productivity. It is known to facilitate the invasion of introduced plant species. This ant is known to chew on irrigation, telephone cabling and electrical wires.
Management Info
Preventative measures: Preventative management is the best option stopping the spread of this species, with attention focused on the movement of soils, particularly in potted plants, and the movement of all other materials from infested areas. The Pacific Ant Prevention Programme is a proposal prepared for the Pacific Plant Protection Organisation and Regional Technical Meeting For Plant Protection. This plan aims to prevent the red imported fire ant and other invasive ant species with economic, environmental and/or social impacts, entering and spreading between (or within) countries of the Pacific Region.

Physical: Fire may play an important role in controlling this ant in many areas by producing an environment less favourable to this ant, but providing a selective advantage to aggressive native ant species, or by direct destruction of colonies.

Chemical: Good control is achieved using the bait 'Amdro' applied over the entire infested area. Complete eradication can be achieved within 24 hours. A major eradication event within Kakadu National Park, Australia, was completed by the end of 2002. Chemical control using general insecticides and chlorinated hydrocarbons such as DDT, heptachlor and Mirex® was the favoured option until relatively recently, with most of these chemicals now phased out due to environmental consequences. Latest options include the insect growth regulators (IGRs), methoprene, fenoxycarb and pyriproxyfen which regress ovarian tissues of fertile queens turning them sterile, and the stomach toxicant hydramethylnon, which kills all workers and reproductives that come into contact with it.

Pathway
Sailing ships in the 18th and 19th centuries. General freight and household movements from infested areas.

Principal source:

Compiler: IUCN SSC Invasive Species Specialist Group
Updates with support from the Overseas Territories Environmental Programme (OTEP) project XOT603, a joint project with the Cayman Islands Government - Department of Environment

Review: Dr. Ben Hoffmann, CSIRO Sustainable Ecosystems, PMB 44 Winnellie, NT 0822, Australia

Publication date: 2011-08-03

ALIEN RANGE
[1] AMERICAN SAMOA
[8] AUSTRALIA
[4] BRAZIL
[2] CHILE
[1] COOK ISLANDS
[1] CUBA
[1] EGYPT
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[1] CHINA
[1] COTE D'IVOIRE
[1] ECUADOR
[1] ETIOPIA
[5] FRENCH POLYNESIA

Red List assessed species 1: CR = 1;

Anas laysanensis  CR

BIBLIOGRAPHY
51 references found for Pheidole megacephala

Management information
AntWeb, 2006. Pheidole megacephala

Summary: AntWeb illustrates ant diversity by providing information and high quality color images of many of the approximately 10,000 known species of ants. AntWeb currently focuses on the species of the Nearctic and Malagasy biogeographic regions, and the ant genera of the world. Over time, the site is expected to grow to describe every species of ant known. AntWeb provides the following tools: Search tools, Regional Lists, in-depth information, Ant Image comparison tool PDF field guides maps on AntWeb and Google Earth and Ant genera of the world slide show.

AntWeb is available from: http://antweb.org/about.jsp [Accessed 20 April 2006]

The species page is available from:


Summary: This plan establishes a national framework to guide and coordinate Australia's response to tramp ants, identifying the research, management, and other actions necessary to ensure the long term survival of native species and ecological communities affected by tramp ants. It identifies six national priority species as an initial, but flexible, list on which to focus attention. They are the red imported fire ant (Solenopsis invicta), tropical fire ant (S. geminata), little fire ant (Wasmannia auropunctata), African big-headed ant (Pheidole megacephala), yellow crazy ant (Anoplolepis gracilipes), and Argentine ant (Linepithema humile).

GLOBAL INVASIVE SPECIES DATABASE
FULL ACCOUNT FOR: Pheidole megacephala


Summary: A proposal prepared for the Pacific Plant Protection Organisation and Regional Technical Meeting For Plant Protection. This plan aims to prevent the red imported fire ant and other invasive ant species with economic, environmental and/or social impacts, entering and establishing in or spreading between (or within) countries of the Pacific Region.


Summary: PIkay (Pacific Invasive Ant key) is an electronic guide designed to assist users identify invasive ant species commonly encountered in the Pacific Island region. The guide covers four subfamilies, 20 genera and 44 species. The primary tool offered by PIkay is an interactive key designed using Lucid3 software. In addition to being fully illustrated, this key allows users to enter at multiple character banks, skip unknown characters, and find the most efficient path for identifying the available taxa. Each species is linked to its own web page. These species pages, or fact sheets, are linked to an illustrated glossary of morphological terms, and include the following sections: 1) Overview of the species; 2) Diagnostic chart illustrating a unique combination of identification characteristics; 3) Comparison chart illustrating differences among species of similar appearance; 4) Video clip of the species behavior at food baits (where available); 5) Image gallery that includes original specimen images and live images (where available); 6) Nomenclature section detailing the taxonomic nature of the species, and 7) Links and references section for additional literature and online resources.


Summary: This database compiles information on alien species from British Overseas Territories. Available from: http://www.jncc.gov.uk/page-3660 [Accessed 10 November 2009]


Summary: PaDIL (Pests and Diseases Image Library) is a Commonwealth Government initiative, developed and built by Museum Victoria and The Online Publishing Team, with support provided by DAFF (Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry) and PHA (Plant Health Australia), a non-profit public company. Project partners also include Museums Victoria, the Western Australian Department of Agriculture and the Queensland University of Technology. The aim of the project is: 1) Production of high quality images showing primarily exotic targeted organisms of plant health concern to Australia. 2) Assist with plant health diagnostics in all areas, from initial to high level. 3) Capacity building for diagnostics in plant health, including linkage developments between training and research organisations. 4) Create and use educational tools for training undergraduates/postgraduates. 5) Engender public awareness about plant health concerns in Australia. PaDIL is available from: http://www.padil.gov.au/aboutOverview.aspx, this page is available from: http://www.padil.gov.au/viewPestDiagnosticImages.aspx?id=645 [Accessed 6 October 2006]


General information


**Summary:** Cette ?tude porte sur les relations comp?titives entre trois esp?ces ainsi que sur les facteurs li?s ? leur succ?s dans l’invasion des milieux.


**ITIS (Integrated Taxonomic Information System).** 2005. Online Database *Pheidole megacephala*

**Summary:** An online database that provides taxonomic information, common names, synonyms and geographical jurisdiction of a species. In addition links are provided to retrieve biological records and collection information from the Global Biodiversity Information Facility (GBIF) Data Portal and bioscience articles from BioOne journals.


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**Sarnat E.M. and E. P. Economo, 2011. Fiji Ants. The online home of Fiji s Myrmecofauna.**


