Lasius neglectus

System: Terrestrial

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Common name: invasive garden ant (English)

Synonym

Similar species: Lasius australicus, Lasius turcicus

Summary

Lasius neglectus is a recent arrival in Europe. Some of its populations have attained pest status but on other sites, the ant is still in an arrested state, perhaps in the lag-phase, lacking the major characteristics of invaders. Its negative effects are caused by the enormous numbers of ants tending aphids on trees and occupation of electrical conduits in homes and gardens.

Species Description

Lasius neglectus, though known to be present at a location in Budapest, Hungary, was only described in 1990 (Van Loon et al. 1990). It is a member of the sub-family Formicinae. The length of the worker, queen and male are 2.5-3mm (worker), 5.5-6mm (queen), 2.5mm (male); the mandibles are 7-toothed; hairs are lacking on the scape (first segment of antenna) and usually on the legs. Their colour is yellowish-brown with the thorax somewhat paler. The live weight of the worker is 0.65-0.80mg and the queen, 6.8-9.6mg. Espadaler and Bernal (2004) observed that "the female is immediately recognisable within the European Lasius by its comparatively reduced size and proportionately smaller gaster (swollen part of abdomen), as compared with the thorax. The male is the smallest within the European Lasius (s.str.) species".

Polygyny in the nest (the presence of more than one functional queen), and the enormous numbers of workers travelling up and down trees is also a characteristic of the species.

Notes

Lasius neglectus is a poorly known species living in huge supercolonies with no apparent within-colony boundaries, and with a highly polygynous kin-structure (Van Loon et al. 1990; Boomsma et al. 1990)

Lifecycle Stages

Lifecycle stages (data from one colony in north-east Spain): eggs (from April to October), larvae (all year around), worker pupae (May, June, September, October), sexuals pupae (May, June), winged sexuals (May, June).

Habitat Description
In Europe Lasius neglectus is found in urbanised areas, from city streets to semi-urban lots with some natural vegetation. Trees are a key resource for the ant. In Asia Minor it is found in natural steppe habitats (Seifert, 2000).

Reproduction
The colony grows by budding, involving the displacement of queens with some workers at short distances (a few metres). In laboratory studies, isolated queens have also been shown to be able to found new colonies, although it is not known if this possibility exists under natural conditions. The carbohydrate content of newly mated queens is consistent with the observed loss of mating flight of this species although the relative wing area indicates that L. neglectus queens should be able to fly.

Nutrition
Feeding is mainly based on sugary foods (aphid honeydew, nectar, vegetal juices). In spring the ants look for aphids at the base of herbs and small vegetation, where the ant constructs temporary earth shelters. In summer, when tree aphids are abundant, the ants shift to this nearly ubiquitous resource.

General Impacts
Lasius neglectus may invade the interior of houses and occupy electrical conduits, causing short-circuits or damage to electro-mechanical devices. Outdoors, it nests at the base of plants and attends aphids on trees, usually producing negative effects. As a result of the ants protecting aphids and "milking" them for their honeydew it causes honeydew to be produced in large quantities, in turn causing sooty mould to grow on leaves. Not all populations seem to be invasive, in Spain only three out of eleven populations have been denounced as damaging or invasive. This is probably due to climatic constraints, especially dryness during the Mediterranean summer.
Management Info
Preventative measures: 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 or social impacts from establishing within or spreading between countries in the Pacific.
A detailed pest risk assessment for the eight species ranked as having the highest potential risk to New Zealand (Anoplolepis gracilipes, Lasius neglectus, Monomorium destructor, Paratrechina longicornis, Solenopsis geminata, Solenopsis richteri, Tapinoma melanocephalum, Wasmannia auropunctata) was prepared as part of ‘The invasive ant risk assessment project’, Harris et al. 2005., for Biosecurity New Zealand by Landcare Research. Lasius neglectus scored as a high-risk threat to New Zealand. The Invasive ant risk assessment for Lasius neglectus can be viewed at Lasius neglectus risk assessment. Please see Lasius neglectus information sheet for more information on biology, distribution, pest status and control technologies.

Integrated Pest Management: Usual measures against domestic ants are not expected to be effective. The enormous numbers of ants that integrate in the supercolonies are to be controlled by an Integrated Pest Management (IPM) strategy, involving both chemical control on trees and soil, physical management of trees (cutting branches in contact with buildings) and limiting irrigation as much as possible (Rey and Espadaler, 2005).
Please follow this link for more detailed information on the management of the Lasius neglectus compiled by the ISSG.

Pathway
Movement of potted plants, turf peat, soil from construction.

Principal source: Van Loon et al. 1990; Boomsma et al. 1990; Seifert, 2000; Espadaler & Rey, 2001; Espadaler and Bernal, 2004

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ALIEN RANGE
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GLOBAL INVASIVE SPECIES DATABASE
FULL ACCOUNT FOR: Lasius neglectus

BIBLIOGRAPHY
25 references found for Lasius neglectus

Management information
Espadaler, X and V. Bernal, 2004. Lasius neglectus
Summary: Summary of known distribution, morphology and main biological characteristics and damages caused by this species.
Summary: The invasive ant risk assessment project, prepared for Biosecurity New Zealand by Landcare Research, synthesises information on the ant species that occur in New Zealand (native and introduced species), and on invasive ants that pose a potential threat to New Zealand.
There is a great deal of information in this risk assessment on invasive ant species that is of global interest, including: biology, distribution, pest status, control technologies.
The assessment project has five sections.1) The Ants of New Zealand: information sheets on all native and introduced ants established in New Zealand 2) Preliminary invasive ant risk assessment: risk scorecard to quantify the threat to New Zealand of 75 ant species. 3) Information sheets on invasive ant threats: information sheets on all ant species scored as medium to high risk (n = 39). 4) Pest risk assessment: A detailed pest risk assessment for the eight species ranked as having the highest potential risk to New Zealand (Anoplolepis gracilipes, Lasius neglectus, Monomorium destructor, Paratrechina longicornis, Solenopsis geminata, Solenopsis richteri, Tapinoma melanocephalum, Wasmannia auropunctata) 5) Ranking of high risk species: ranking of the eight highest risk ant species in terms of the risks of entry, establishment, spread, and detrimental consequences.
NB. The red imported fire ant (Solenopsis invicta) is considered to be the worst ant pest in the world. However, Solenopsis invicta was specifically excluded from consideration in this risk assessment as this species has already been subject to detailed consideration by Biosecurity New Zealand
(This invasive ant pest risk assessment was funded by Biosecurity New Zealand and Foundation for Research, Science and Technology. Undertaken by Landcare Research in collaboration with Victoria University of Wellington and Otago Museum)
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.

General information
ANTAREA. 2009. ANTAREA.


**Summary:** Formal morphological description of the species. Compared to *Lasius alienus* and *Lasius*.


**Summary:** Supplementary data on the population of Warsaw


**Summary:** First reference for Belgium


**Summary:** First reference for the Iberian peninsula


**Summary:** Reproductive physiology (carbohydrates, lipids) and morphology (thorax and wing size in queens). Isolate queens are capable of starting new colonies.


**Summary:** First reference for the Canary Islands


**Summary:** First reference for Romania.


**Summary:** Formal taxonomic revision of *Lasius* (s.str.) ants. Treatment for each species includes biological comments.


**Summary:** Update of known and unpublished locations for *Lasius neglectus*.


**Summary:** Allozyme analysis of the Budapest population, compared to *Lasius alienus*.