



Raspberry crazy ant or Tawny crazy ant

Taxonomy

Order: Hymenoptera

Family: Formicidae

Species: *Nylanderia fulva* (Mayr)

Nylanderia fulva is emerging to be one of the most economically important invasive ant species in the world. Native to East-central South America, it is now present in the Caribbean. Its nests have multiple queens and thus the colonies can reach mammoth proportions. They can displace the red imported fire ant (*Solenopsis Invicta*) in the USA using a formic acid "shield" which neutralizes the venom of *S. Invicta*. It is one of several ants referred to as "crazy ants" due to their quick and erratic movements.



Profile view of a minor worker of *Nylanderia fulva*

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Biology

Normally found in primary or young second growth forest both wet and dry. However, they to be more ubiquitous in disturbed habitats. Nests can be found in a variety of material including leaf litter, dead wood, under stones, hollow stems, under epiphytes, in tree canopies etc. They are generalist omnivores and feed on small insects, vertebrates, and honeydew egested by phytophagous Hemiptera.

Distribution in Caribbean

Common throughout the Caribbean region, including Anguilla and TCI in disturbed and natural habitats.

Pathway of Entry

Natural dispersal: Budding/nest fission. A newly inseminated queen, accompanied by some worker ants, establishes a new satellite colony.

Intentional/Anthropogenic dispersal: via plant and soil material, infested passenger luggage, empty sea containers, timber, fresh produce, vehicles etc. Colonies often contain many queens which if moved long distances further disperse the species.

Impact

Native biodiversity is adversely affected as it may outcompete native ant-fauna as well as other arthropod life. It also affects vertebrates such as reptiles and amphibians. These ants are known to chew through wiring and insulation and infestations can lead to short circuits in electrical equipment.



Further Information:

ANTWIKI:

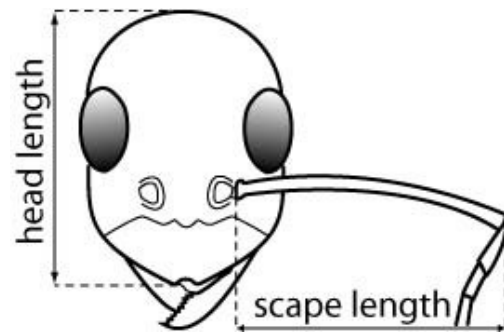
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ANTWEB:

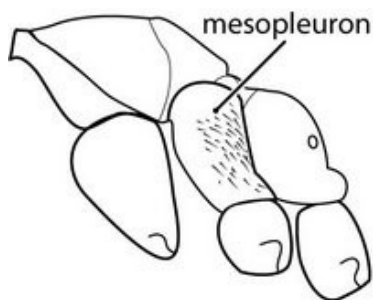
<https://www.antweb.org/description.do?genus=nylanderia&name=fulva&rank=species>



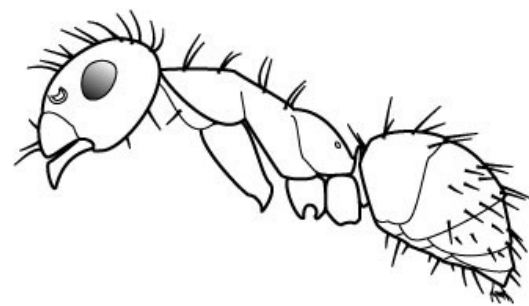
Anterior view of a worker of *Nylanderia fulva*
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Anterior view of *Nylanderia fulva* with antennal scapes < 1.5x length of head © Eli Sarnat / PIAkey



Profile view of *Nylanderia fulva* showing the matted, dense hairs on its cuticle © Eli Sarnat / PIAkey



Profile view of *Nylanderia fulva* showing the typical stiff, hairs organised in pairs familiar in *Nylanderia* and *Paratrechina* © Eli Sarnat / PIAkey

Field Description

Medium-sized ants (2-2.3mm), *Nylanderia fulva*, are monomorphic and generally golden to reddish-brown in colouration. They are mainly recognised by a combination of the following characters: 12-segmented antennae with no club, antennal scapes <1.5X the length of the head, one petiolar segment and an acidopore is present at the apex of the gaster. Like *Paratrechina*, species in the genus *Nylanderia* possess stiff, upright hairs organised in pairs on the back of the thorax.

Nylanderia fulva also has a dense coat of fine, hair matted against most of its cuticle often lending it an alternative common name of the "hairy crazy ant".

Similar Species

In the Caribbean, *N. fulva* workers may be confused with those of *Nylanderia pubens*. Thus, males are needed to examine their parameres (external reproductive organs). In *N. pubens*, the pilosity of the setae is denser and more organised whereas in *N. fulva* the setae are sparse and uneven. Differentiation via molecular means is often the most reliable method. Other species like *Nylanderia bourbonica* are similar in overall appearance but generally much darker in colour and the sides of its thorax has sparser coverage of fine hairs. *Paratrechina longicornis* is another species that may appear superficially similar, however, its paired setae are paler, its antennal scapes longer, its legs are longer, it lacks hairs on the mesonotum, and the body is more slender.