



Longhorn crazy ant or Black crazy ant

Taxonomy

Order: Hymenoptera

Family: Formicidae

Species: *Paratrechina longicornis* (Latreille)

Synonyms: *Formica gracilescens* Nylander

Summary

African or Asian in origin, this invasive pest has been spread to sub-tropic and tropic zones, as well as indoor habitats in temperate zones. It can cause considerable environmental damage through its adverse effect on native biodiversity. It can be a significant agricultural pest as it protects and tends phytophagous Hemiptera leading to their persistence while it is also problematic when foraging on mass in human habitations both interior and exterior.



Profile view of *Paratrechina longicornis* © April Nobile/
AntWeb.org

Biology

In their natural habitat, nests maybe located in accumulations of dry or moist, decaying litter and soil under objects like rocks and deadwood on the ground. They may also form nests in deadwood and trees themselves. Urban nests form in wall cavities, refuse heaps etc. They are highly adaptable and may forage 25 m or more from their nests meaning locating nests is difficult and controlling them even more so.

Its name is derived from (*longus* (Latin), meaning “elongate” and *cornu* (Latin) meaning “horn”), referring to its long antennae. Its name also derives from its erratic, jerky movements, hence “crazy”.

Distribution in Caribbean

It is widespread in the Caribbean.



Pathway of Entry

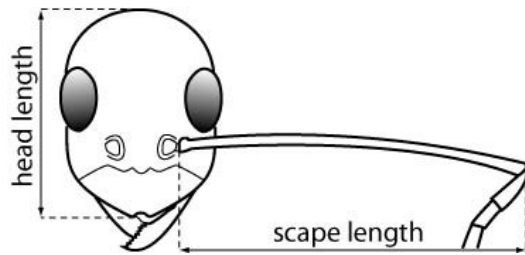
Natural dispersal: primarily by budding, that is, a newly inseminated queen accompanied by some worker ants, establishes a new satellite colony.

Intentional/Anthropogenic dispersal: commonly intercepted on air and sea cargo e.g. nursery trade-potted plants, rootstocks etc., infested passenger luggage, empty sea containers, timber, fresh produce, vehicles.

Impact

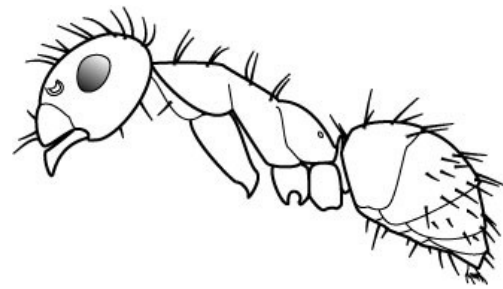
P. longicornis is a “supercolonial” species meaning super-colonies can form which out compete native species of ants and other insects. It also promotes the persistence of plant feeding pests on crops.





Anterior view of *Paratrechina longicornis* head showing long basal segment/scape of the antenna in relation to the head length. Notice also the eyes breaking the outline of the head

© Eli Sarnat/PIAkey



Profile view of *Paratrechina longicornis* showing the numerous dorsally erect, coarse setae (often paired) covering the body

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Field Description

Paratrechina longicornis are readily recognised by their colossal antennae (note the extremely elongate basal segment/scape of the antenna, 1.5X as long as the head), long legs, numerous dorsally erect, coarse setae (often paired) covering the body and fast, erratic movements. They are rather small (2.3-3 mm), slender-bodied and generally very dark brown but the colour can be variable.

Other diagnostic characters include: a waist with one distinct 'wedge-shaped' and anterior-tilting petiole/node; a circular fringe of setae (acidopore) at the apex of the gaster/end of the abdomen; 12-segmented antenna without a club; and elliptical, strongly convex eyes that break the outline of the face when viewed from the front, and situated close to the posterior border of the head.

Similar Species

Anoplolepis gracilipes, the Yellow Crazy Ant is superficially similar with very large antennae, long antennal scapes and long legs, however, it is larger, has bright yellow/orange colouration, few, thin setae, not produced in pairs, and longer scapes, ~2X as long as head length.

Camponotus spp., particularly *Camponotus maculatus* group. the Carpenter Ants. Some may superficially look similar with large antennae; however, they are much larger, have few, thin setae, not produced in pairs, smaller antennal scapes, <1.5X as long as the head length and a rather arched thorax. Other *Paratrechina* spp. may appear similar but generally have dark setae and eyes that don't break the outline of the face and shorter scapes, <1.5X as long as the head length.

Further Information:

ANTWIKI:

https://www.antwiki.org/wiki/Paratrechina_longicornis

CABI 2020: <https://www.cabi.org/isc/datasheet/44709>