

invertebrate facts

FS06030

Green ants (*Oecophylla*)

http://www.ento.csiro.au/science/ants/formicinae/oecophylla/oecophylla.htm

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Australian Ants Online
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Species Details
smaragdina

Genus *Oecophylla*

(Subfamily Formicinae)

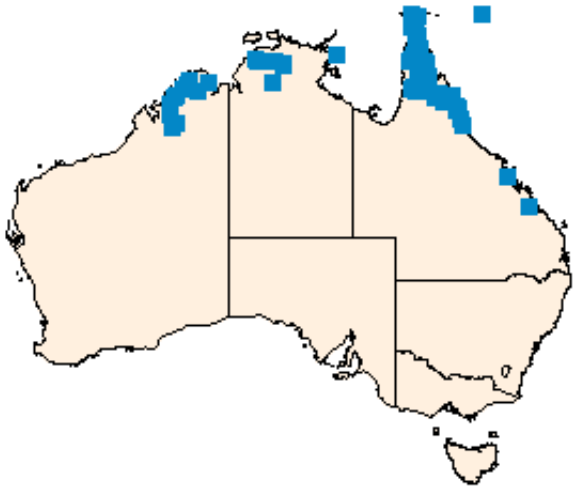


Biology

The single Australian species of *Oecophylla*, *O. smaragdina* always nests in trees or shrubs. Its nests are constructed by attaching leaves together with silk produced by their larvae. Individual colonies can become very large with many separate nests spread over several trees. They are very aggressive and will vigorously attack intruders. Foraging takes place both on vegetation and on the ground, and they are predacious. Due to their large population sizes and predacious habits, these ants have been used as biological control agents (Way and Khoo 1992).

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Distribution and Habitats



Oecophylla contains 11 fossil and two extant species (the latter each with several subspecies). The extant species are found in tropical regions of Africa and India east through south-east Asia and into northern Australia. Within Australia they occur in forested areas of northern Western Australia, the Northern Territory and Queensland, extending south along the Queensland coast to approximately Rockhampton (see map). For details of their distribution, see Lokkers (1986).

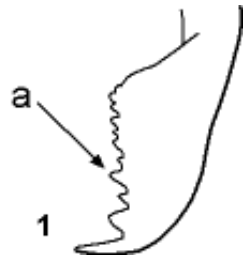
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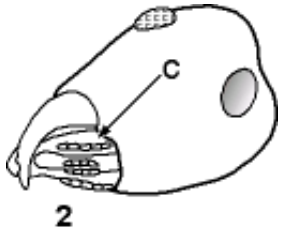
Identification Notes

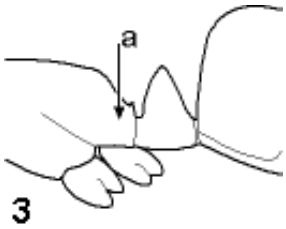
In the Australian representative of this genus, the mandibles have 10 or more teeth (Figs 1a, 5), the palp formula is 5:4 (the outer or maxillary palps with 5 segments, the inner or labial palps with 4 segments) (Fig. 2c), the area above the hind leg is smooth and without a small opening (the metapleural gland opening) (Figs 3a, 6) and the

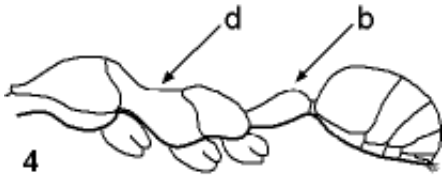
scale of the petiole is low and rounded and without distinct front, top or rear faces (Figs 4b, 6).

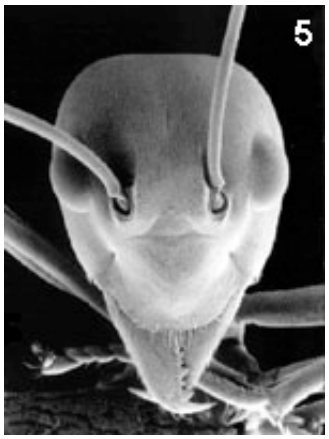
The Australia species of this genus, *O. smaragdina*, is the well-known green tree or weaver ant of northern regions. It is recognisable by its elongate, pale yellow and/or green body (Fig. 6), numerous mandibular teeth (Fig. 5) and the reduced number of palp segments (Fig. 2c) (6:4 in most other formicines).
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General Literature

Lokkers 1986 (distribution); Way and Khoo 1992 (biology).

Genus Nomenclature

Oecophylla Smith 1860: 101. Type species: *Formica smaragdina* Fabricius, by monotypy.

Taxonomic Catalogue of Species

Go to the Taxonomic Catalogue.

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Literature Cited / Additional Reading

Smith, F. 1860. Catalogue of hymenopterous insects collected by Mr A.R. Wallace in the Islands of Bachian, Kaisaa, Amboyne, Gilolo, and at Dory in New Guinea. J. Linn. Soc. Zool. 4(suppl.): 93–143.
Lokkers, C. 1986. The distribution of the weaver ant, *Oecophylla smaragdina* (Fabricius) (Hymenoptera: Formicidae) in northern Australia. Australian Journal of Zoology. 34 : 683–687.
Way, M. J., Khoo, K. C. 1992. Role of ants in pest management. Annual Review of Entomology. 37 : 479–503.

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