Monomorium floricola (Jerdon 1851)

Taxonomic Category

Family:	Formicidae
Subfamily:	Myrmicinae
Tribe:	Solenopsidini
Genus:	*Monomorium*
Species:	*floricola*

Common name(s): bicoloured trailing ant (Deyrup et al. 2000), floral ant (www55), futairo-hime-ari (www1)

Synonyms ( )

Original name: *Atta floricola* Jerdon
Synonyms or changes in combination or taxonomy: *Monomorium* (*Monomorium*) *angusticlava* Donisthorpe, *Monomorium cinnabari* Roger, *Monomorium floreanum* Stitz, *Monomorium impressum* Smith, *Monomorium poecilum* Roger, *Monomorium specularis* Mayr

Current subspecies: nominal plus *Monomorium floricola* var. *furina* Forel, *Monomorium floricola* var. *philippinense* Forel

General description: antennae 12-segmented, including a 3-segmented club with last segment greatly expanded. First antennal segment (scape) not reaching posterior border of head when laid straight back. Eye usually consisting of about 10 ommatidia, arranged in an outer ring enclosing a single inner longitudinal row of 2–4 (usually 3) ommatidia. Mandibles each with 4 teeth. Clypeus with a distinct pair of longitudinal carinae present, relatively widely separated and weakly diverging anteriorly. Clypeal margin between carinae usually shallowly concave, sometimes more or less straight. Metanotal groove shallow or not present. Propodeum without spines; posterior margin rounded in profile. Two nodes (petiole and postpetiole) present, roughly similar in size, postpetiole more broadly rounded than petiole. All dorsal surfaces of head and body with erect setae.

Identification

Size: monomorphic. Total length 1.5–2.0 mm.
Colour: colour variable but pattern characteristic. Head and gaster dark brown to black. Alitrunk yellow to brown, usually contrasting strongly with head. Nodes yellow, usually same colour or lighter than alitrunk

Surface sculpture: head and body mostly smooth and shining, without sculpture.
Sources: www1; Bolton 1987

Formal description: Bolton 1987: 390–391

Behavioural and Biological Characteristics

Feeding and foraging

A slow-moving and unaggressive species (Morrison 1996a; Way et al. 1989), but appears able to forage successfully and be abundant in the presence of dominant species (Way et al. 1998), even though it cannot always exclude them from baits (Clark et al. 1982). Dominant species, such as *Oecophylla smaragdina*, did not behave aggressively when it was foraging nearby (Way et al. 1989). It can be a significant aboreal predator of insect eggs (Way et al. 1989).

Colony characteristics

Largely an arboreal nesting species (Smith 1965), nesting in any small cavities (www9). Colonies are often large and polygynous (Smith 1965), with up to seven dealate queens (www9).

Dispersal

Mating occurs in the nest and natural dispersal is via budding, as queens are wingless (Passera 1994). Human commercial activity is likely responsible for long-distance dispersal.

Habitats occupied

Found in open land, nesting under bark on trees, in hollow twigs (www1), or in dry stems of herbs and grasses. In the Pacific it is almost wholly arboreal, forming large colonies in trees and bushes in disturbed habitats and is a prominent urban species (Wilson & Taylor 1967). It does not appear to penetrate into undisturbed forest. In Florida it occasionally appears in houses but usually nests outside (Klotz et al. 1995; Deyrup et al. 2000), and in Brazil it is a very minor component of the house-infesting ant fauna (Delabie et al. 1995). In temperate regions it can establish itself in hothouses and other constantly heated buildings such as blocks of flats (Bolton 1987). In Hawaii it is well distributed throughout the populated and unpopulated islands in uncultivated and cultivated land and in residential areas, and it infests commercial tropical flower fields (Huddleston & Fluker 1968).

Global Distribution (See map)

Native to

Possibly tropical Asia (Wilson & Taylor 1967).

Introduced to

Many tropical and subtropical areas, but occasional populations reported from heated buildings in urban areas in temperate regions.

History of spread

An extremely successful tramp species widely dispersed by human commercial activity (Bolton 1987)

Interception history at NZ border

Seventeen interceptions recorded at the border, to April 2004, mostly workers on fresh produce from Australia (where the speices is established in the far north – Reichel & Anderson 1996) and the pacific. Workers were found at the port of Napier in summer 2004 during ant surveillance, and a colony was subsequently eradicated. This species is established on the Kermadec Islands.

Justification for Inclusion as a Threat

Established in numerous counties outside its native range, including the Kermadec Islands. Recorded from urban environments in temperate regions. Commonly intercepted at the border. Commonly infest houses and feed on household foods (Smith 1965). An effective egg predator in arboreal habitats that could impact on native species.

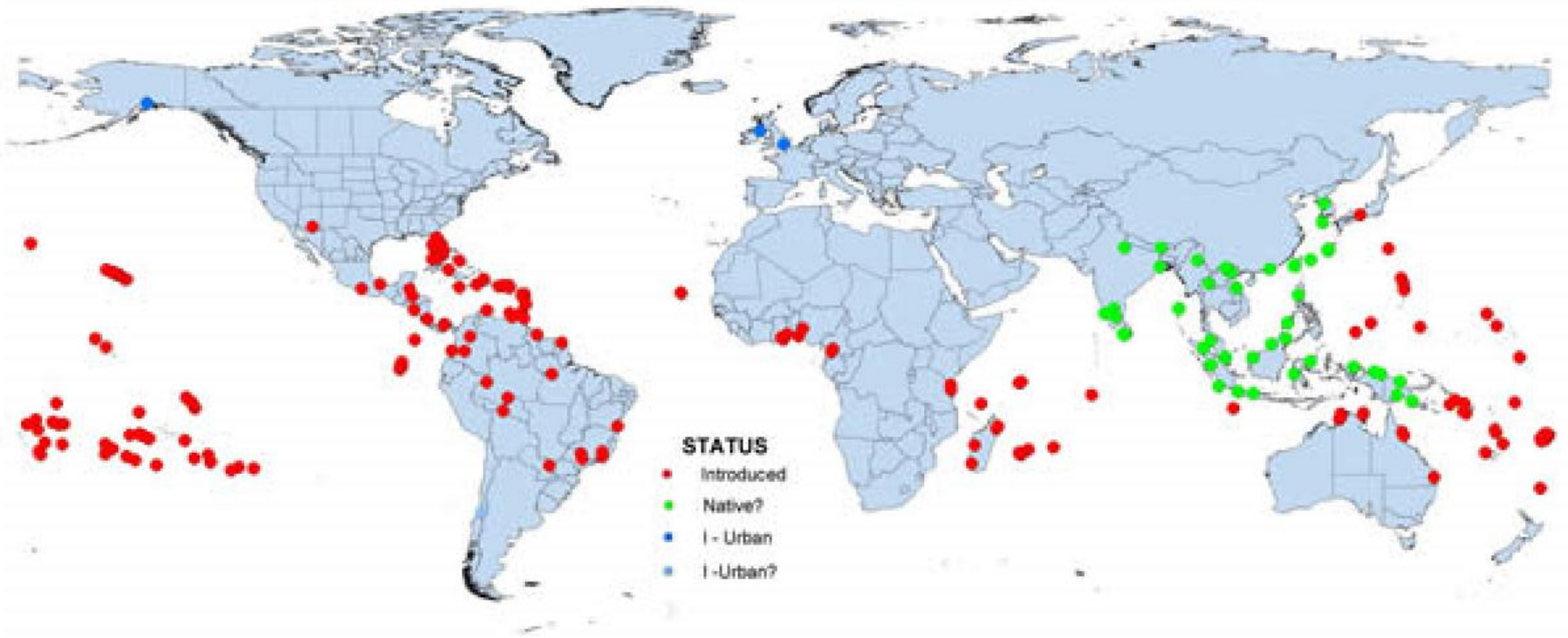
Mitigating factors

Areas of suitable climate in New Zealand limited outside urban areas. Not considered a pest outside urban environments (Deyrup et al. 2000). Shown to be attracted to surveillance baits at Napier.

Control Technologies

No reference found.

Compiled by Richard Harris & Jo Berry



Distribution map.