CAMPONOTUS LIGNIPERDA COLONY JOURNAL

9 March 2007

These ants arrived today after I had ordered them from Antstore in Germany a couple of weeks ago. The colony consists of 10 workers (including 2 major workers), 1 Queen, and about 8-12 larvae. I have placed the open tube in which the ants came, into a tank filled with peat and pieces of dead wood. I have the tank in my living room at the moment as I do not want to put them out into the shed just yet; it is still a little cold out there and I want these ants to have at least dug themselves into the soil first. I have placed some freshly killed mealworm and an orange segment into their tank but they have not taken any notice of them yet. Several workers have emerged out of the tube and are currently exploring.

11 March 2007

The ants have remained in their test tube, but have filled the open end up with soil, much of which they have placed into the tube itself, almost one half of the way down the length of the tube, just prior to the internal cork 'door'. There has only been one worker creating the soil door over the past 48 hours – one of the smaller workers. Yesterday I watched in amusement as the smaller worker created a passageway just wide enough for her. One of the big workers wanted to return to the nest after spending a few hours eating from the piece of cockroach I had placed in the tank. When she tried to return into the tube, she couldn't fit through the door; the smaller worker had not made it wide enough. So the larger worker tore down most of the doorway in order to get inside. The smaller worker seems to have realised now and although she is continuing to repair the door, she is has made the passageway much larger.

14 March 2007

If I said this colony has been very active over the past few days I would not be telling the truth, but if I said that one particular worker has been working like a Trojan, I would not be lying. One of the smaller workers has just spent, as far as I can see, the better part of 5 entire days just moving pieces of soil into the entrance of the test tube in which the small colony still resides. Now that the ants have 'settled in' I have moved the tank into the garden shed with the rest of the ants. However, I have taken some extra precautions with this tank. As those of you who have read my other journals know, I do not keep lids on my ant tanks as I believe that the environment in the tank should match that of 'outside' as closely as possible. However, because these ants like to nest in old wood, and the shed is made of the stuff, I have placed this tank on two bricks which stand in two water moats. Hopefully this will prevent the ants from escaping and eating my shed. Just on a note of interest: The other day one of the huge workers was grinding its jaws on the lip of the test tube – and I could clearly hear it grating the glass!!! No way do I want to be bitten by her! She's one tough lady!!

7 April 2007

So, I have had these ants for one month now, save 2 days, and they have finally moved out of their tube and into the tank. Although I cannot see where they have nested, I believe them to be nesting underneath one of the dead wood blocks that I had placed into their tank. I am pleased to say that, so far, there have been no 'accidents' with the ants and the water moat that their tank sits on.

They do not seem to be eating much, and anything I put into their tank generally gets ignored; honey, freshly killed insects, fruit, ham and, Ant Jelly. I have seen them eat from a dead cockroach in the first week, so I guess that has sustained them, after all the colony is only 11 ants strong including the queen.

One of the big workers was walking around on the plastic sheeting that covers the side of the tank. I could hear her footsteps!

28 April 2007

I have seen nothing of these ants for the past few weeks, but then again I am currently away on a four week CLM course, which keeps me away from home during the week. The ant shed has been averaging on 26 degrees due to the glorious weather we have been experiencing here in the south of England. This should be very comfortable for these ants considering they are from warmer climates than the UK.

17 May 2007

I took the side covering off from the fish tank and was able to peer into the nest of the Campos. A hidden tunnel leads from the surface to a chamber near the bottom of the tank where most of the ants, including queen, and brood are. They seem very cramped with hardly enough room for the queen to move around in. Another tunnel comes off from this chamber and extends along the side of the glass right over to the opposite side of the tank. Again the tunnels seem hardly big enough for the ants and indeed they do seem to have to squeeze themselves through. I have not seen these ants on the surface, foraging or eating for about 6 weeks now, which concerns me a little. However, they could well be foraging/eating when I am not there to see it, and I have been putting regular food into their tank, though they show no signs of being touched. I guess the ants know what they are doing.

3 June 2007

Disaster! This colony has died out. Once they had dug the tunnel leading to the chamber, they never emerged above ground again, not even, as far as I saw, to forage. When I checked on the ants yesterday I noticed that they were all dead, including the queen.

I do not know why but I have never been able to successfully raise a colony of Camponotus, even though I've tried to mimic their natural environment as closely as I can. Perhaps I should steer away from this species.

17 June, 2007

Further to my previous journal entry I have something new to report. On emptying out the Campo tank, I noticed movement in amongst the dead ants. Lo and behold, the queen ant started running about, so I grabbed hold of her and placed her in a Tupperware tub, into which I placed the test tube covered with tinfoil, leaving the end of it open so that she could go in if she wanted. I have also provided her with water and food, which I was very pleased to note a chest take advantage of. I am not sure if she will start a new colony and if I'm honest I do not hold much hope for this. Queen ants that I have already established a colony and then find themselves on their own do not usually go on to establish a new colony. However I am prepared to give her every chance to prove me wrong. She has been in the tub for about a week now and as far as I can see that she has laid no eggs yet.

13 July 2007

The Campo queen laid a batch of eggs shortly after the last update, and now I believe they are at the first larval stage. She did keep them in one corner of the Tupperware tub and stayed in that corner for most of the time, keeping guard over them and cleaning them. She has been eating from any items I have put in there for her. A few days ago she moved the brood into the test tube, out of the light and hardly emerges anymore, though I can peer into the end and see her and her brood within. I have high hopes for a new colony now ☺

5 August 2007

All the queen has done for the past 3 weeks is sit in the far end of the test tube, which is covered by tin foil, and doesn't move, except for the waving of her antennae. I cannot see if the brood are still present as she is in the way. I could remove the tin foil but I would rather not, as it makes her feel secure. Hopefully there is still brood present, but if there are, they are growing very slowly ☹

15 August 2007

Couldn't resist, and removed the tin foil to have a look at the brood. I was very disappointed to note that she only has one larvae present. I am sure she has several a few weeks ago. The queen seems healthy enough, but my hopes for her raising a new colony are fading.

18 August 2007

When I checked on the Campo queen yesterday I discovered that she had died. I thought this might be the end result when she lost all her workers a few months ago, but there was a glimmer of hope when she started to raise a new batch of brood.

END OF JOURNAL