

2017

15 June 2017, Thursday

I obtained this small colony of *Tapinoma erraticum*, from Ants Kalytta today. The colony consists of one queen and about 50 workers, with a few pupae, and even a couple of callows present. Currently they reside in a test tube which I have placed open, into a small plastic tub which is attached to a horizontal acrylic ant farm I brought from Antstore last year. So far, I have tried this acrylic ant farm with three varied species of ant, and none of them like it, but I thought I would try it with these ants.

The ants are currently dashing about now as I have opened their tube up and placed it into the set up. They should settle and start to explore soon. More updates to follow.

18 June 2017, Sunday

These ants settled down very quickly from their journey from Germany, but have remained in their test tube despite having access to the horizontal acrylic ant farm. This is now the fourth ant species I have offered this type of ant farm to, and none of them seem to like it. The Goblin Colony workers explore it, and place their dead in it, but so far have refused to move in. Perhaps when they colony gets very large they will move in. There have been a few escapees which I found out was via the tiniest of gaps in the acrylic ant farm where the connecting tube joins, but I have now sealed that up. The queen remains hidden and some of the pupae are changing from a white colour to orangey-red, which means they are close to emerging into adult ants. They have eaten everything I have given them so far.

22 June 2017, Thursday

On looking in the colony today I noticed two winged males, which was a bit of a surprise. The males of this species are quite large compared to their workers, but their shape distinguishes them from winged queens. It'll be interesting to see how many more males are produced this year, and when they will attempt to fly.

23 June 2017, Friday

Couldn't go for my usual early morning run this morning as I hurt my back playing with a cat yesterday, so I am comforting myself by eat a pack of green Jelly babies >.< Anyway, this morning I dug out one of my spare small (kit A) ant farm nesting boxes, filled it with damp sandy loam, and attached it to the Goblin Colony foraging box, removing the unused acrylic horizontal ant farm. I attached this about two hours ago, but they haven't found it yet.

19 August 2017, Saturday

Quite a bit of activity in this colony over the past few weeks, with a lot of ants foraging, and eating the food I give them. I have tried them with freshly killed cockroaches and flies, which they like, but they seem partial to the ant jelly I give them. It seems that all the winged males have now been killed off. The colony has settled nicely into their new home, and since applying the insect repellent to the lip of the foraging box, there have been no further escapes.

1 September 2017, Friday

Again, there has been a marked increase in activity in this colony. I have also noticed that many workers seem to rest in the transparent plastic tubing at the nesting box end. Sometimes they will congregate at

the other end of the tube, where it joins the foraging box. If I put something down too hard on the shelf, they all run back up the tube toward the nest. I guess this is a natural reaction to protect queen and brood. It's quite difficult to see into this nest unless I use a torch, when then upsets them. All seems well with this colony so far.

1 December 2017, Friday

My ants are currently hibernating. Therefore, no updates to this journal will be made until they are awake in the Spring.

2018

My ants have woken up from their winter hibernation, or rather their 'semi-hibernation'. They didn't fully hibernate but rather they drastically reduced their activities, often staying within the nest and not feeding. The queen stopped laying eggs, and any present brood (larvae only) went into a stasis in which their development was 'frozen' or put on hold. This is normal behaviour.

Due to this semi-hibernation I stopped updating this journal, otherwise all you would have read, constantly, would be, not much activity today.

However, now that they are resuming their activities I am resuming my activity on these journals.

15 March, Thursday

My ants have woken up from their winter hibernation, or rather their semi-hibernation and have been tucking into their first large meal, since the start of the winter, namely tasty cockroach. I had also cleaned out their foraging tank, replacing all the odd substrate. I placed in some white calcium sand without dampening it (to prevent them from nesting in it).

Last year, when I obtained these ants, they mainly nested in the tube that linked their foraging box and their nesting box. During the winter they moved into the nesting box and there they remained. However, now many of the workers are found sitting around in the tube, though the queen and other workers remain within the nesting box now.

I have just given them some freshly killed cockroach, which they have welcomed, being their first proper meal since they went into 'hibernation'.

13 April 2018, Friday

I picked out about 20 dead workers ants that had been dumped unceremoniously in the foraging box. 20 sounds like a large number, but it's not really. Many ants die off during the hibernation phase, it's not uncommon. I can still see plenty of workers, brood and, of course, the Queen, in this colony, so I am not concerned by this.

This colony has been sending out workers to forage for food, and I have obliged them with freshly killed cockroach and protein jelly. Pineapple flavour today.

They still seem to prefer to nest in the plastic tubing rather than in the soil. This colony might be a candidate for my acrylic horizontal ant farm. We'll see how they get on this side of hibernation first.

12 May 2018, Saturday

Lots of activity and lots of worker ants over the past few days. Still can't see the queen despite looking for her intently. The colony is still in the clear tubing but all I see are workers and some brood. Let's hope the queen is hidden in the nesting box or in the tubing port itself. Don't want to lose these.

3 June 2018, Sunday

Much activity again over past few weeks, and some rather large workers being produced. Still haven't seen the queen ... oh please be alive in there, somewhere! There are larvae present within the nest still. It's interesting to compare these ants with their look-alike counterparts, *Lasius niger*. More active than my current *niger* colonies.

10 July 2018, Tuesday

My growing doubts about the health/presence of this colony's queen were confirmed just now when I noticed the dead queen in the foraging area of the set up. It's always disappointing when you lose a queen of an established colony, as there's only one way for this colony now to go, seeing as she was the only queen. I'll keep the workers going

but with no queen and no brood to take care of, this colony's activities and population will soon decline until the colony is no more.

Therefore, I will now close this journal.

JOURNAL CLOSED

Thank you for reading my journal. If you have any questions you can email me on myrm@antnest.co.uk

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