

## MYRMICA RUGINODIS COLONY JOURNAL

### 22 MAY 2007

I received this colony on 22 May 2007 from Ant Store, consisting of about 40 workers, 1 queen, and no brood. These ants are almost identical in appearance to *Myrmica rubra* but do have a few subtle differences, but a microscope/magnifying glass is really needed to see the differences.

I have placed them into the same type of set up as *Tetramorium impurum* 2 Colony, except for this time I have changed the nesting material slightly. In this farm there is natural loam/sand with a layer of clay pebbles at the bottom to soak up any excess water, and so provide a reservoir to keep the sand slightly moist. The foraging arena has a very thin layer of dry white sand (dry so as to prevent the ants from nesting in it), and some pebbles for decoration. There is a drinking water trough for the ants in the corner of the tank. A length of plastic tubing links the foraging arena and main farm together.

At the time of writing this entry I have not yet attached the tube containing the ants to the ant farm set up. I will do this as soon as I have uploaded this journal.

### 25 May 2007

The ants stayed in their glass tube for almost 2 days before one of the workers ventured forth and found the main ant farm area with its slightly damp sand just waiting to be made into a nest. The excited worker hurried back to the tube and recruited 10 nest-mates to help her start on the new nest. Two days later the entire colony moved into the nest in the sand, which is still under construction as I type this. I took a peek inside the nest and found that a wide tunnel went straight down to a large chamber about three quarters of the way down the tank. The ants have tunnelled right up against the glass giving me a very clear view into the nest.

I removed the dry white sand that was in the foraging arena as it was causing a bit of a problem; the sand was so fine that the ants kept becoming coated in it, making them look like ghost ants. It didn't seem to cause them any harm, but I also noticed that when the ants laid a trail on the powdery sand, other ants seemed to have difficulty in locating and following the trail. Currently there is no sand or anything else in the foraging tank, though I may experiment with coarser dry sand.

### 17 June, 2007

There has been quite a bit of activity in this nest, which still currently stands on my PC desk. The nest expansion appears to have stopped for the moment and on taking a peek inside I have seen that there is a large chamber in the middle of the ant farm, with a further tunnel that descends down to the bottom of the ant farm where the dry clay pebbles are. The ants have

carried about half a dozen of the pebbles up into a little ledge in the tunnel. I cannot see if the ants are among the layer of pebbles at the bottom of the ant farm. There is quite a bit of condensation in this lower pebble layer, which is good news as it means that there is a form of water supply down there which will help keep the sand moist. I also noticed that it appears that the queen has yet to lay eggs, but then again I did not see the queen so she could be in a hidden part of the nest, where there could also be some eggs. The ants also occasionally collect in the clear plastic tubing that emerges from the ant farm and connects to the foraging tank.

I have also been watching the ants to see if the fact that they are right next to the computer speakers and monitor affects them at all. So far it appears that they are not disturbed by this at all.

### **13 July 2007**

I said in the previous update that I did not think at the time that the ants were being affected by living right next to my computer monitor and speakers, but now I am not so sure. I noticed that they seemed to be very quiet when the pc was on, yet it would appear that they conducted most of their foraging by night, obviously when the pc was switched off. Two weeks ago I moved them into the Ant Shed and now their activity has increased a lot. There has been a huge amount of nest expansion, and now the ants are actively foraging in the tank arena. Today I placed a piece of cockroach into their tank and within a few minutes they were excitedly swarming all over it, tearing chunks from it and carrying them back into the nest.

### **5 August 2007**

Loads of activity over the past few days; the ants completely moved out of the nesting tank and placed themselves, the queen, and all the brood at the end of the plastic tubing that connects the two tanks together. They seemed to be attempting to dig in the main foraging tank, but the soil in there is bone dry and only about 5mm in depth, so they couldn't dig any decent tunnels. The problem with *Myrmica* is that they like to build very wide tunnels and large chambers, and the thin style ant farm just does not seem to be big enough for that, and they soon run out of room. I also think they may have moved out as it was very warm in the ant shed yesterday (30 degrees c) even with the window and door open. I looked a little later on and saw a right old commotion going on in the foraging tanks, with workers rushing around here and there. When I looked closer I could see the cause of their alarm; the queen had decided to leave the nest and go for a wander around the foraging tank. The workers were dashing round and about her, trying to pick her up to carry her back to the nest, but she was having none of it. She just fancied a bumble round. When I looked again later she had returned to the tube.

When I looked in on them this morning, they had moved back into the main nesting tank, but there are still a lot of workers in the foraging tank, eating food.

### **15 August 2007**

Activity in this tank continues to be very busy, and at times it is hard to feed them as there are so many of the ants wandering around on the underside of the lid. A few days ago I had been feeding them when I noticed one ant emerging from the open tank. I gently flicked her back in without harming her, but it was enough to annoy her. She ran back up toward the lid with her jaws open, and she must have set off an alarm scent as suddenly about 10 other ants came charging up, all bearing their jaws in an aggressive manner.

### **9 September 2007**

These ants have moved into the *Lasius flavus* tank, after I removed the end of their tube from the foraging box, and placed it into the *Lasius flavus* tank. My reasoning behind this was because the *flavus* stay and forage underground, then perhaps another, small colony of ants could be housed in there as well. Rather than move the *ruginodis* in there myself, I placed one end of their tube into the tank and allowed them to decide if they wished to move. They did! In a few days the whole colony had moved out of the nesting box and into the hexagon shaped tank. A few days later I was removing some of the dead uneaten food from their tank when I moved the large piece of dead wood in there, not realising they had nested underneath it. When I lifted the wood it exposed the entire colony - and they went mad! I quickly replaced the wood but angry workers poured out with their jaws wide open in a very aggressive manner. They were not happy. They settled down after about 15 minutes, and now life has returned to normal for them in their new tank.

### **6 October 2007**

I have not seen anything of these ants over the past few weeks, and it appears that they have not been foraging at all. Due to the fact that the outside temperature, particularly at night, has been dropping, it is probable that these ants are preparing for hibernation.

### **22 October 2007**

Hibernating!

### **9 March 2008**

I have seen these ants out and about on a few occasions over the past few weeks, including last week when I placed a piece of fresh cricket in their tank. They found it quickly and about 15-20 workers swarmed around it and had lunch. I think they have gone back to bed now, though.

**15 April 2008**

I have not seen much of these ants since the last update, though I do not get to check on the as often as I like. No longer hibernating.

**08 May 2008**

I feed these ants about two hours ago, and when I checked up on them just now, there appears to be no workers foraging whatsoever. Perhaps they are just simply not hungry at the moment.

**9 August 2008**

Due to the lack of time that I have to dedicate to my many ant colonies, I have decided to give several of them away, and this colony is one of them. Therefore this journal is now closed. Sorry for any disappointment to those that may have been following the progress of this colony.

**JOURNAL CLOSED**